

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

# RUE MAGAZINE

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# NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun  
By the men who cool for gold  
The Arctic trails leave their secret tracks  
That would make your blood run cold*

**A**ny Canuck worth his weight in moose tips and icicles will instantly recognize these first four lines from Robert W. Service's *The Creation of Sam McGee*. The 1907 poem, which is taught in school as a classic of Canadian literature, tells the story of a man who promises to emigrate Sam McGee, a man who came to the Yukon from Tennessee during the gold rush-seeking fortune, but instead succumbed to the relentless cold. Determined to make good on his word, the "thief mad" narrator strips the man's corpse from a dogged and eventually finds an ice-locked steamer boat, where he cremates the body in the furnace. After going on a hike "for I didn't like to hear him scold so," he returns to see McGee happily roasting away in the furnace, pleading with him to close the door ("It's fine in here, but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold and storm").

Service paints a vivid picture of a servant steeped in insanity: "There wasn't a breath in that land of death, and I burned, horror-driven / With a corpse hot 'neath that couldn't get no because of a prairie geek." The work is not only a vivid depiction of a very culturally specific place—with another tongue-in-cheek Canadian sense of humor towards the cold—it illustrates the terrible price paid when man takes more than he can chew in the battle against nature: desperation, madness, death.

The Australian filmmakers featured in our cover story have tapped into something similar. These films share themes about films such as *The Loved Ones*, *Showdown* and *Wolf Creek*. Host Wolf Conradson (and McGee's explanation that the fire cremated was a "dumping ground for the scum of England," where the inhabitants view "nature and the landscape as a place of fear, the unknown and danger.")

Terrain and weather-wise it's the opposite of Canada's North—an area where the heat or a crocodile will most likely get you, rather than the cold or a grizzly bear. But both the Outback and the Great White North are the lands of lonely placeosone can easily get lost in, landscapes that inspire madness and evil deeds, and spots where if it feels like the earth itself could swallow you whole and bump up your bones.

I took a road trip up to the Yukon with five friends, when I was in my early 20s. It was a spectacular life-changing kind of adventure, but one encounter with nature really stuck with me, and sent chills up my spine. We drove up the world's most northern highway, the Dempster, which is essentially a gravel road to the Arctic Circle. Here, I remember the trees got smaller and more spread out before giving way entirely to the spangly forests. Little white shikanes dangled around the obscenely barren, and the sky was a constant concrete grey, so that for north it didn't get darker than twilight in the late spring. Standing on the side of the road, there was what I can really only describe as a sucking silence, as if a vacuum was draining the sound and



colour from the world. I understand *The Creation of Sam McGee* as I never had before, both the concept of cabin fever and how you could easily lose your mind in such a place. And it was only there for a couple of hours—in imagine the effect of living there for a season or years on end. (According to a Health Canada page from 1994, suicide rates in the northern territories are at least double what they are in the lower provinces, and to compare the country overall to Australia, stats there suicide rate rank Canada and Australia at 40th and 44th in terms of global suicide rates.)

While the Aussie filmmakers are doing a helluva job of isolating the effects of an untouristy landscape into an aesthetic, in their horror films full of Outback psychics who snitch, trip and prey on others, I wonder why Canada hasn't really tapped into our own landscapes in the same way? We certainly have our creepy little flicks—see the *dreary* *Reaper* review on p. 41 for an example—but there's never been a really strong flow of horror films tied to the land like the ones from *Dawn Under*.

Perhaps that's because, historically, Australia was a place where people were left as punishment, whereas foreigners flocked to Northern Canada on the promise of fortune. Punishment versus promise—both landscapes certainly offer up their own horrors, but the relationships are very different in the collective cultural psyche.

Dark tales and twisted characters that spring forth from the soil itself are so very, very powerful, and I hope as Canada can tell more tales in the vein of *The Creation of Sam McGee*. After all, there really are strange things done in this midnight sun.

*Dave Alpe*  
dave@rue-morgue.com

*Journal of Pathology & Entertainment*

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THE CREATION OF SAM MCGEE: JAMES MCGEE, JAMES MCGEE, JAMES MCGEE

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# POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



**THE ADVANCE REVIEWS** of *Cabin in the Woods* and *The Raven* [RMF123] are most welcome. I'm looking forward to both of these films. One looks to be something original to the genre, while the other looks ready to lay the big one. John Cusack is a fine actor but perhaps not right to play a gothic icon, the doom-battered Edgar Allan Poe. Still, better him than Spielberg Staloni!

GARY KIMBER — PICKERING, ONTARIO

**JUST A SHORT NOTE** to let you know I love the new *Rue Morgue* column "The Fright Gallery." I'm lucky enough to have procured a copy of the fantastic Mondo print of *Zombi-2*. It looks awl! Looking forward to more Fright Gallery goodies.

DANA DOWNMAN — WILMISTON, FLORIDA

**WAS PRITTY EXCITED** to see *Rollergirls* on the cover of *@RueMorgue*. It's not my fave movie but I like to hear the behind-the-scenes stuff!

@SCARRHAWALT, VIA TWITTER

**POLYDORIST IS THE FOCUS** of *@RueMorgue* this month. I watched my ancient VHS. I realize now why I'm scared of clowns, dolls and culls.

@GOTHMOMCROK, VIA TWITTER

**READING THE EDITORIAL** in *RMF121*, I am totally with you in my love of drive-ins. I grew up this way and it has kept me "horror young" for 44 years now. I remember seeing fun stuff like *70s Kays* of *Sinbad* and *Godzilla*! *Megalot* at the drive-ins of the '70s, as well as many other great horror and sci-fi flicks up 'til the mid-'80s, we had two drive-ins in Marin, Ohio. Now both are just memories. I am, however, lucky enough to live within driving distance of four different drive-ins. I also did an *All Night Shock-O-Rama* at the local Minefield, Ohio, drive-in, *The*

*Springrid!* I made it into a nice '70s/'80s horror marathon to bring back the great times of yesteryear (I've included a flyer for the event.) With everyone jumping on the bandwagon of whatever CGI overblown nonsense Hollywood can squeeze out, it is so nice to still pop in a VHS or DVD and remember there were simpler and better times that the drive-in provided for us real horror fanatics.

VINCE CORNELIUS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

**I MET SOME** of the fine folks from *@RueMorgue* today at Calgary Fan Expo. I may have paid my pents a little...

@BMMBS\_XX, VIA TWITTER

**IN THE GORE-MET'S** column in *RMF121*, when reviewing *Bare* he mentioned it combined elements of torture porn films including *The Descent* (??). Um, how is that torture porn? It is eating like the other movies you listed at all! You need to learn your genres before you can be taken seriously as a reviewer/columnist. The rest of the mag was great. Keep it up, guys.

ADRIAN ROBERTS — TOLEDO, OHIO

**JUST WATCHED** *The Divide*, *The Wicker Tree* and *The Jesuspane*. Thanks to *@RueMorgue* for advertising some awesome movies!

@RAMAHAGONMOLX, VIA TWITTER

**I'M JUST ONE** of the plethora of true horror fans out there who get their fix from the gospel according to *Rue Morgue*. I'm packing my car to head from OC to Los Angeles (to try to forge a career in horror filmmaking!), and have both my current and back issues of the magazine to keep me entertained on the long ride. You provide the most comprehensive, well-rounded and intelligent coverage of the genre that I've ever had the pleasure to read. Whatever the future holds for print/online/whatever media, rest assured there are plenty of rabid fans like me who will forever hold your publication on the highest pedestal.

TED — LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

**HAVE YOU GUYS** ever considered getting into television? You have delved into all other media, why not TV?

KEVIN ZACHARY SERICK,  
VIA FACEBOOK

## WOULD YOU RATHER? WEDNESDAYS?

WEEKLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



**WOULD YOU RATHER** had a wedding ring halfway through your meal? or make a tuxedo jacket out of Meats?!

Dead skin suits are all the rage. I'd go with the second option. Who else could say their sports coat was 100 percent meat?!

JON AMBROS

I'd rather had it in my meatloaf than wearing it.

THE NOMINICAL HONORAIKES

Meatloaf. Tux with a gravy companion. Blyth!

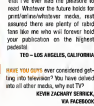
SCOTT ONKENT

Wedding ring. I think... as long as the finger adorned wasn't part of the meatloaf. No one wants a used meat tuxedo.

HEIKO FISCHER

Serving as how it is the only way I will fulfill my fantasy of being inside of Meatloaf, I'll take the tuxedo.

KOOL  
MOOREHEAD



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## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

If it's good to be king, then it's downright brilliant to be Stephen King these days. In April, Syfy announced it's bringing King's 1987 fantasy novel *Eyes of the Dragon* to television as a "long-term" project; MGM recently cast Chloë Grace Moretz (Let Me Be a Dancer) as the Dark Shadows in the title role of yet another big-screen adaptation of Carmichael; and, tapping it off, April also saw the premiere of a low-budget tribute to the man and his work.

Though *You Can't Kill Stephen King* captured the People's Choice Award at its premiere at the Lewiston Auburn Film Festival in Maine, and recently secured a distribution deal from Cornelius Distribution Group, what horror audience will make of a horror-comedy about six young people who seek out the author in a town overrun by Kingly stereotypes, a King-inspired killer and endless references to the man's work in anybody's outfit?

"It's tough to balance a campy horror [film] where you don't want to push too far but you don't want to water stuff down either," says Horne-Klopp, who co-directed the movie with Monroe Mann and Jorge Valdez-Igo. Though the trailer suggests that cheap laughs won out, there also appears to be an appreciation for the absurdities inherent in the writer's material.

"As a filmmaker, I was definitely more influenced by the visuals of [King's] movies that I saw as a child, so that consciously crept into the work as my end," Khalil admits.

most of his books — with incredible help from our co-writer Bob Mader — and found the ones that best fit into the story we were trying to tell. We also wanted to appeal to those who may have only seen his films, which is why we



include a few references to movie versions of his books as well."

Further ensuring the famous author's presence in the movie is its locale: it was shot near King's actual residence in Maui. Mimi and Khalil had been vacationing at a summer home owned by Mann's family when the pair came up with a rough draft of the script during a couple consecutive days of bad weather that kept the pair indoors.

"Out of respect for King's privacy, the *Unleashed* and *Jeans* in the region of

The tower being a small one, it was only a matter of time before the inevitable happened during the

weekend-day shoot. Mann ran into King at a local store. "I was gonna ask him to do a cameo for the film, but in the end only mustered the courage to say hello — He's a true Mainer, in other words, he bleeds right in. A King fighting is about as common as a moose sighting. It's cool and all, sure, but hey, it also happens at least once every season."

The same can be said for King sightings outside of Maine. Earlier this year, the author mentioned a recently completed (but as yet uncredited) novel called *Jayland*, about an amusement park serial killer; to the UK's *Sunday Times*, he also recently published another Dark Tower novel called *The Wind Through the Keyhole*; and opened *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, the musical he wrote with actor John Mellencamp and T-Bone Burnett, at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre.

A.E. SUTMAN

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of an American university professor, legendary luchador wrestler El Mascarado will return in the final installment of a trilogy of horror films that began with 2007's *Mascarado versus The Asylum Monstrymen* and continued with 2008's *Academy of Doom*. Scheduled for release later this year, *Mascarado: Asylum Monstrymen* will

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of an American university professor, legendary luchador wrestler *Mel Mascara* will return to the first installment of a trilogy of horror films that began with 2007's *Mel Mascara versus The Aztec Mummy* and continued with 2008's *Academy of Doom*. Scheduled for release later this year, *Mel Mascara: Aztec Revenge* sees the masked wrestler battle the vengeful hand of an Aztec chief that is resurrected on a college campus – the same one (*University of Mexico* in Colombia, Mexico) where the film's writer/director Jeffrey Zilkman serves as an associate professor.

"I've had a big interest in genre films since a pretty early age," says Uchikawa. "My favorite films as a kid were the old Universal monster movies, and then the Japanese imported TV shows like *Ultraman*. When I set out to write movies, it just made sense to make a film in that genre. There are so many things you can do when you're writing about these masked warriors, Arctic mammals and vampire women."

Musicians like saxophone can be traced back to shortly after his prohibition of wearing cancer deodorant in 1985, when he was cited in his first starring role as the 1989 Mexican black and white film *Perfume* and *MI* *musica*. The character's wretched quality is calculated through a use of both the most popular star, thanks to his bodysuit's physique, sexual aesthetics and sexual cues. Over the next decade, he appeared in fifteen films, including *Naughty*, *Naughty*, *Naughty*, and a host of other sundry super-villains. Along with *MI* *musica* and *MI* *musica* – with whom he co-starred in the highest grossing Mexican superhero film of all time, 1972's *El hombre de Guaymas* – Muscatelli was a member of Mexico's cinema during the 1960s and 70s.

Following the death of El Santo in 1984, the campy luchador-on-scorpions subgenre petered out. During this period, Místico would register only one film credit, 1989's *La verdad de los luchas*, but he continued to ply his trade inside the wrestling ring, maintaining his stables as a major draw in Mexico, Japan, North America, Europe and Africa. An ambassador of wrestling, Místico was inducted



into the Pro Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2010 and the WWE Hall of Fame earlier this year.

"These [horror] movies are often racist and

like wrestling, all over the world" he says. "They have action and mystery and bigger-than-life characters. They have a universal appeal. Everyone is afraid of monsters. Everyone wants to see good triumph over evil. I enjoy doing those films, and I am happy that people want to continue seeing them, and as long as they do, I will continue making them."

Shirama, who resurrected Macrae's film career after the weather's more than fifteen-year absence from the screen, says having "The Man of 1000 Heads" play the leading man in his supernatural trilogy has been a surreal experience.

<sup>1</sup>One time, we were having dinner with the chair of the university and Bill is having an argument.

with a professor about Chinese literature," he recalls. "The waiter comes over and brings us soup, and in one swift movement – swoosh – Bill switches off his mask for another mask with an open mouth so he can eat his soup, all while carrying on a conversation about Chinese literature."

At 69, Mascaras is still in remarkable physical condition and his eyes shine brightly from under his trademark mask, adorned with a three-inch M on the forehead. As a pop culture icon, particularly in his native Mexico, the wrestler says it's important for him to continue to fight against the forces of evil, both onscreen and in the ring.

"Every day, people come up to me and tell me they have enjoyed my matches and my time as children and that they have grown up with M'Kwinda as a hero," he says. "I am humbled by that, and I appreciate the opportunity to continue to be that hero for my fans all over the world. These new films do represent a rebirth, in a way, for me."

DAN MURPHY





# NEW DOCUMENTARY AIMS TO DECODE *THE SHINING*

Despite being a highly respected classic by one of cinema's most legendary auteurs, *The Shining* has only recently been the subject of a documentary, albeit one with an unexpected approach. Room 237, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January, reveals very little about the Stanley Kubrick film, but a great deal about the army of conspiracy freaks and superfans who've spent the last three decades trying to decode what the redrum, blood holes and talking fumes are all about in Kubrick's 1980 adaptation of Stephen King's 1957 novel.

Sometimes in the spring of 2010, producer Tim Kirk showed director Rodney Ascher an online article by Jay Weidner in it, the indefatigable conspiracy theorist made his case that *The Shining* is actually Kubrick's way of coping to his role in the faking of the Apollo moon landing footage.

"We just found the idea of hidden meanings in *The Shining* fascinating," Ascher says. "After Jay's article, we discovered new theories, remembered earlier ones—I had once done a little tongue-in-cheek trivia thing with some *Shining*-based numerology I found in the book Kubrick. Inside a Film Art's Maze—and thought a guided tour through the most significant ones would be a good project."



After approximately six months of research and talking to people espousing different theories about the movie, they used a Kickstarter campaign to score up \$5426 from 28 backers toward production costs. Room 237, named after the Overlook Hotel room where Jack Nicholson's character gets seduced by the ghost woman in the bathtub, highlights five theories, including the one from Weidner. History professor Geoffrey Cooks suggests *The Shining* depicts the director wrestling with the Holocaust; journalist Bill Skotnikowski found it to be about the extermination of the American Indians.

"Tim and I are both Jewish fathers and Jack [Nicholson] seems like a real cautionary figure to us," says Ascher of his own theory. "I totally watch it identifying with him as a worst-case-scenario version of myself, and see it as a warning about putting your work, especially unpaid creative work, ahead of your family and/or using them as a scapegoat for your failures. Working on this movie, I found myself alone at a keyboard all day, typing away, unsure whether what I

was doing was total gibberish or would be interesting to anyone else."

A.S. BERMAN

## ENTRAILS

William Finley, who portrayed the drifter role in Brian De Palma's 1974 cult classic *Phantom of the Paradise*, passed away April 14 at 71 while undergoing surgery. The actor also appeared in several other De Palma films—including *Sisters*, *Desiree* and *Killard*. *The Black Dahlia*—and *David Hooper's Eyes Alive* and *The Furies*. His turn as the perpetually fucked-over composer Nirvana in *Paradise*, however, remains his best known work.

For prices starting at approximately \$900 per person, Starlins can travel from New York City to Canada over five nights on a Carnival Glory cruise ship, while playing volleyball and mini-golf with cruise stars Costas Mandoor, Mark Rolston, the *Jagnew* puppet and several actors who played roles in the films.

Poe fans have the opportunity to view four recently discovered letters and a previously unknown version of the writer's poem "Be Hellen" at the Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia. The exhibit "From Poe's Quill: The Letters and Manuscripts of Edgar Allan

Poe," runs from July 11, and will include dozens of other rare manuscripts, including two short stories and a few pages of notes. And don't forget to examine the only surviving bit of the writer's clothing, a walking stick, and a lock of his hair.

Work on the third installment of *The Human Centipede* hit a hurdle recently thanks to filming was to begin, Dieter Laser, star of the first movie, pulled out of *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* in a steeply worded press release, producer Rona So threatened legal action, stating that "Mr. Dieter Laser's ego has grown to laughably big proportions," before assuring fans that shooting would resume later this year. Laser filed back that the script arrived five months late and, after he found no way to identify with the character as written, if writer/producer Tom Six couldn't accept Laser's own interpretation, the filmmaker should "change horses."

A Georgia art dealer has been sentenced to six and a half years in prison

for counterfeiting vintage horror movie posters and lobby cards. From 2006 to 2008, Kerry Haggard, 47, used e-mail sites such as eBay to sell and trade posters for films such as *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Wolf Man* (1941), which he had professionally reproduced. He has also been ordered to repay more than \$1.3 million to 24 people he defrauded for posters selling in price from \$500 to \$5,000.

French-language horror *L'Événement* is slated for an English remake. Ironically, Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's follow-up to *Inside* (*A l'intérieur*) was originally planned as an English-language film but, as history revealed in *RAW* 112, "We were losing our control over the artistic element and the budget was compromised to find, so we decided to make the project in France for a budget equivalent or even slightly lower than for *A l'intérieur*." French distributor SND Films has set up the project, with a script penned by David Birke (Guy)

A.S. BERMAN

## MONSTRO BIZARRO

A trail walking near a logging stand in London, Oregon, unearthed only what some Bigfoot researchers are calling "the most significant biological find in the last 40 years." According to a group of well-known investigators, including *Finding Bigfoot's* Cliff Brackman, there were 152 distinct foot impressions. Brackman stated on his blog that: "The London Footprints represent the largest collection of data ever retrieved from any single Bigfoot site, ever." A scientific document about the discovery is being prepared with the help of Idaho State University Anthropology Professor D. Jeff Hekman.

Author Eric S. Brown, whose past work includes the *Bigfoot* novel series, announced that he's working on an official revision of the 2011 *Bigfoot* film. Doggy Creek Brown says he'll maintain the premise of inept searches tormenting the countryside, but his beats will be even larger and more menacing. He also added a new subplot to kick up the action.

CYLE BLACKSMITH

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

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A GEORGIA HIGHWAY."

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THAT HAS BECOME THE PUNK  
"CHINDHOUSE" GENRE!"

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"THIS IS SOME HARDCORE SHIT!"

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# CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

PAGE NO. 123

Members of a New Jersey family are suing their former landlord for the return of their security deposit after allegedly discovering the house he rented them was haunted, forcing them to flee the premises less than a week after moving in.

Roger Williams' 1977 feature, *Last House on Dead End Street*, was originally titled *The Cuckoo Clocks of Hell*.

A high school sewing class in Arkansas has taken on a project that has them transforming old wedding dresses and other formalwear into burial gowns for stillborn infants.

Author Dean R. Kouser has written and published under six different pseudonyms, including Leigh Nichols, David Kutz, Brian Corley and Aaron Wolf.

South Wales resident David Nisbett came third suicide by decapitation in 2003 after tying one end of a rope around a lamp post and the other around his neck, before driving off in his car.

In August 1999, two men jumped to their deaths from a hotel window in Manchester, England, precisely duplicating a scene from the British crime series *Cracker*, which had been filmed in the same location.

The English word "hex" (to curse, or cast a spell) comes from the German word for witch, "hexe."

Last month, Bollywood actress Mitrakshi Thapar (who appeared in the horror film *404*), was kidnapped by a pair of actors hoping to extort money from her family. Despite receiving the ransom, they strangled and beheaded her anyway.

A woman starved to death in Switzerland after attempting to live solely off at sunlight, an idea she got from watching a documentary about an Indian guru who claimed to have been doing just that for over 70 years.

Despite numerous previous appearances on the best-seller list, *The Execution* (1984) by Stephen King and Peter Straub, was the first King novel to hit number one. His first solo book to top the charts was it, two years later.

Kyle Schmid, who plays the vampire Henry on the US television series *Being Human*, previously starred as a vampire named Henry on the Canadian TV series *Slayer* (2007-2008).

Pop sensation Claude François, who was frequently described as the "French Elvis Presley," was electrocuted in 1978 when he attempted to change a light bulb while standing in a bathtub full of water.

A prisoner at a Mexican prison died in late 2000 when he fell through a skylight while peeping on an inmate who was having a conjugal visit with his wife.



COMPILED BY MONICA L. HUBBARD  
AND A WRITING TEAM ON BEHALF OF THE SICK TOP SIX

## BODY HORROR

A LOVE-CRAFTIAN HORROR  
ARTIST: Torrey Lee Wendler ([torreylee.com](http://torreylee.com))

◀ "This is one of my favorite pieces. It represents my love for skulls and HP Lovecraft. The old eyes are the important focus in this tattoo, because it evokes emptily despite the outer appearance of the creature. A lesson to be learned and projected into reality. It's like I said don't judge a book by its cover theme picked into a piece of dark art."

—Torrey Lee Wendler

## THE SICK TOP SIX GRUESOME GRAD NIGHTS



1. **THE LOVED ONES**  
LOLA ATTEMPTS A LUBUTOMY
2. **CARRIE**  
LEGENDARY BLOOD FLOOD
3. **PROM NIGHT**  
LOU LOSES HIS HEAD
4. **NIGHT OF THE CREEPS**  
UNDEAD JAKES ON THE DOORSTEP
5. **THE PROWLER**  
PITCHFORKED WHILE PITCHING WOO
6. **JENNIFER'S BODY**  
SWIMMING POOL POLE IMPELMENT

**TORTURED THOUGHTS**

**THE WASP WOMAN (1959)**

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN BY DAY - A LUSTING QUEEN WASP BY NIGHT.



EVENTUALLY, IT WAS A DIFFERENT PAIN. LAMBERT, AND THEY'VE HAD A WHOLE LOTTA CLIPPING TO GET OUT OF IT.

# SOME GHOST STORIES ARE MORE THAN LEGENDS



## "A CAN'T MISS FOR FANS OF GHOST HUNTERS"

-AJNITCOOLNEWS.COM

A hair-raising, paranormal found-footage investigation by a group of avaricious actors determined to exploit a family claiming to be haunted by a ghost.

What they encounter will terrify you.



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# OUR END IS THEIR BEGINNING

## "BLOOD-SPLATTERED AND CREEPY!"

-EzineArticles.com

Two professional "cleaners" are hired to collect a frozen corpse located high in the mountains and dispose of it in an old warehouse. A swiftly-defrosting infected corpse in tow, they arrive at the warehouse to discover a group of amateur cleaners, a rising body count...and a rising corpse.



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# NEEDFUL THINGS



## 1 VAMPIRE KITCHEN TIMER \$12

Barring your capricious totally believ-  
—but with this new bloodsucker on hand to  
remind you when it's time to feed, you only  
have to worry about things turning into a  
pile of smoldering ash when the sun  
comes up. Vamp up your kitchen at  
[kitchenwiththesun.com](http://kitchenwiththesun.com).

## 2 VOODOO BONES SHOWER CURTAIN \$38

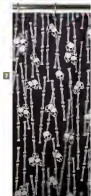
When you wash away all that bad mojo,  
make sure it stays in the tub and runs down  
the drain with this 100-percent cotton, ma-  
chine-washable shower curtain from Ben  
Linen. Even if you don't know a thing about  
voodoo rites, it'll add a little eerie magic to  
your morning ritual. Bury your bones at  
[benlinen.com](http://benlinen.com).

## 3 OUTLANDISH MINI FIGURE GUYS SERIES 1 \$10 (per of five)

Inspired by the likes of *Monster in My  
Pocket*, the Outlandish Mini Figure Guys  
are the latest design project from toy en-  
thusiast George Gasper. First of his com-  
pany, October Toys, voted for their  
favorite characters, and Multiskull, Crow-  
ded Kid, Phantom Shiftrooze, King Gas-  
tor and Skull carried the day. The only place  
you'll sniff out the elusive outhouse res-  
toration is [octobertoys.com](http://octobertoys.com).

## 4 ZOMBIE STITCH NECKLACE \$25

Lovingly crafted from hand-sculpted  
polymer clay beads, black thread and a  
snazzy piece of clear stretch cord, Kara  
McAfee's Zombie Stitch Necklace creates  
the illusion of a repair job abandoned  
halfway through. The needle's even still  
hanging to one side, in case your noggin  
starts feeling a little loose. Get stitched up at  
[etsy.com/shop/WendyCute](http://etsy.com/shop/WendyCute).



**CRYPTIC  
COLLECTIBLES**

**FROM NIGHT ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK**  
(RCA/ABC Corp., 1991)

One of the most popular horror flicks to come out of Canada, the 1980 cult slasher *From Night* is remem-  
bered as much for its soundtrack — courtesy of prolific  
composers Phil Duce and Carl Zeller — as for stars  
Jamen Lee Davis and Lindsay Wilson. The rare Japanese  
soundtrack LP (of which only a few thousand copies  
were pressed) contains five cuts, including the disco

tracks "Love Me Till I Die" and "From Night 2," heard  
during the film's infamous dance sequences. Never re-  
leased in North America, copies have been known to sell  
for hundreds of dollars on eBay.

**JAMES BARNWELL**

FROM NIGHT SOUNDTRACKS AT [RCA-ABC.COM](http://RCA-ABC.COM)



OF FROM NIGHT: ARTIST'S CONCEPT BY JAMES BARNWELL



AUSTRALIAN CINEMA HAS  
BRED ALL SORTS OF  
OUTBACK PSYCHOS OVER  
THE YEARS. NOW, SEAN  
BYRNE'S *The Loved Ones*  
CONTINUES THE TRADITION  
WITH A TEEN TERROR IN A  
PINK PROM DRESS



by STUART F. ANDREWS

**IT'S HARD TO SAY WHAT'S MORE HORRIFYING:** the neurotic hell of adolescence or the romantic comedies of the 1980s designed for teens. For those of us unfortunate enough to have endured such cultural afflictions, *The Loved Ones* arrives as a long-awaited, homemade antidote that can best be described as *Pretty in Pink* meets *The Love Chickensaw Massacre*. It's a wild, pulpy, horror-tinged throw-back spaghetti western that most kids might prefer to sit through in school than in their bedrooms. It's the movie-making team with John Hughes

The debut from Australian director Sean Byrne depicts the troubles of a high school student named David (Daniel Denzard), a pretty-faced, pretty-boyed, heavily medicated kid who's paralyzed with guilt following his own big role in a recent heavy baggy. His world grows even more slowly more unpleasant when the quietest girl in school, the dark-haired Lola Stone, a.k.a. "Pancakes" (Patricia McLeavy) asks him to the prom. Already in possession of a fully functioning girlfriend, he politely turns her down, but rejection isn't the sugar and spice that Lola needs: She's determined to have her perfect, tiny tale, end-of-high-school experience, she wants her overly protective and completely devoted David (John Hughes) to follow her to a masochistic celebration of her own design.

Unfortunately for our hero, Lola's idea of a romantic night involves tying her date to a chair in a remote farmhouse in order to torture him gruesomely with all manner of household implements. So with power drill in hand and spending dial just in flesh, she prepares him for what the director describes as nothing less than a "bite worse than death." The moral of the story? If an over-the-top girl asks you to the prom, just say yes!

In contrast to his many, many best friends, John (Richard Wilson) finds himself at the real prom with The drop-dead gorgeous, dead-of-the-world and out-of-his-league Mia (Jessica McNamee) in a parallel plot that serves as a commentary on the physical, emotional and social horrors lurking at the farmhouse.

And while all the trappings of your typical backwoods cannibalist horror abound, Byrne rises above those familiar elements thanks to the

inclusion of ingredients plucked off from other genres, namely the teen romantic comedies of Hughes. Unlike the bleak, masochistic, testosterone-focused horrors that have dominated the genre over the last few years, *The Loved Ones* is madly, madly excited, eye-popping carnival of horrors that bands to life with an abundance of comic performance. But it's McLeavy as the detached-but-neurotic Lola who stands out most among the stellar cast. And not since *Candy* has the high school genre been rendered in such alarming, blood-spattered tones.

Mark Henry's recent doc *Not Quite Hollywood* celebrated the country's genre legacy, but now call back to ensure a global spotlight for a new genre of horror from Down Under. So director Byrne joins the likes of Justin Kurzel (*Snowtown*, p. 18), Greg McLean (*Wolf Creek 2*, p. 21) and Jamie Blanks (*Long Weekend*) as part of a new breed of Australian horrorers who continue to exorcise the demons that, along with the nation's unforgiving landscape, have long haunted the Australian collective psyche.

*The Loved Ones* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2009 where it claimed the Audience Choice Award of the celebrated Midnight Madness program. It opened in Australia in 2010 where it was incredibly received and has since developed a huge cult following.

Now, after sitting for a number of years in distribution limbo, it's finally coming to North America this summer through Paramount Image.

We tracked down Byrne to school us on his twisted tale of love, angst, gore, very, very scary.

**The *Loved Ones* comes in its soft-core edition, right after John Hughes' *Heavenly Creatures*.**

Well, we've got a character, Frances, who's basically stuck in childhood. She's like a five-year-old girl, still dressing in pink, still prying through any her parents will come. She's not really living in the real world. On the other hand, she's still attending school, she's in court, she's just an over-protected, over-protected exception. She just wants love, but how she goes about it is more extreme than probably the way most of us would

**With a schooler, how does that bloody teacher fit in?**

Well, we've got a character, Frances, who's basically stuck in childhood. She's like a five-year-old girl, still dressing in pink, still prying through any her parents will come. She's not really living in the real world. On the other hand, she's still attending school, she's in court, she's just an over-protected, over-protected exception. She just wants love, but how she goes about it is more extreme than probably the way most of us would

**There are many gruesome scenes in the movie that aren't as key as the one in the bathhouse where she sees the mother who killed her brother. Is it about the only one you can't watch?**

Well, we've got a character, Frances, who's basically stuck in childhood. She's like a five-year-old girl, still dressing in pink, still prying through any her parents will come. She's not really living in the real world. On the other hand, she's still attending school, she's in court, she's just an over-protected, over-protected exception. She just wants love, but how she goes about it is more extreme than probably the way most of us would



**Spiking The Punch:** Love (Robin McCarthy) shows Drew (Drew Barrymore) that family dinners can be torture, as *Daisy* (John Brinkley) and *Bright Eyes* (Aimee Teegarden) look on, and (below) Drew and girlfriend Holly (Mikaela Truitt).

then let the audience's mind run into incredibly dark places because the monster in your head is always more powerful than the monster that's on the page and, a lot of the time, the monster that's on the screen.

**But sometimes you're *kill us and sometimes you're not*. So what allowed you to make the distinction there?**

Well, I guess it's just a pacing thing. I was just trying to get into the audience's shoes. There are times when you want those horror moments and then there are other times but I think the film's incredibly contrasting and it was actually won't have and showed things [literally we would be in X-rated territory]. But I wanted each horror moment to have its own personality, and I also wanted the shape of the film to keep shifting and to be unpredictable. So sometimes I would go the more traditional kind of horror route and other times I'd try to go for something more subtle. Other times, there'd be a really black screen that's just totally about the canvas.

**The torture segments take over and all standard household objects, things that would be readily available in anyone's kitchen.**

I wanted the audience to realize if we seen a lot of films where the torture is incredibly inventive but sometimes I feel one step removed from that, whereas I wanted the audience to actually be a part of the horror, to be close to it. That's why I read household implements like knives and forks, things that you might have: extra your dinner with—and power tools and boiling water.

**Or a nice *Black & Decker* power drill with its own battery pack?**

Right, yeah, something you can get for Father's Day. And is lethal. I wanted to use a kettle that everyone's touched because it brings you closer to the horror. I think than you're suddenly inside the film rather than outside of it looking in.

**Even though torture plays a big part in the movie, there are so many other homecoming elements at work that the torture seems to function more of just as a backdrop for how the emotional dynamic they act between the principals.**

Drew's definitely an element of torture but I think *The Loved Ones* is a redemptive horror in a way. I was trying to make the Rocky of horror films. I know this s--- that if you don't care, you don't care, and I really love my characters and I felt the more that it was about ending on a note of hope, then the harder I could go when it came to the violence. I was always thinking of *The Loved Ones* as a jet-black comedy and the whole John Hughes element like you're talking about. I mean, five is a candy-colored nightmare, and I think a lot of recent horror looks and looks as bleak as the situation. With *The Loved Ones*, we

tried to create a world with colour and personality and make it as vibrant and fun and weird and given as possible and then start to strip all that away.

In a way, I think it gives us further to travel. You're going from this shiny, happy world to literally the dark depths of hell. I was trying to think what is incredibly horrific, and there's the old saying: "It's like worse than death." Well, what is a fate worse than death?

**What is it about Drew that allows him to endure so much brutality?**

To me, *The Loved Ones* is about a desecrated hell or a kid with a death wish who is forced to endure this literal hell and in the process realizes that he's got everything to live for, and I don't think cinema has often seen a heavy metal hero before. I just think that metal is a voice of the disenfranchised, and this kid self-mutilates and his pain is his saviour. I think he's probably the only kid on the planet that could possibly survive this hell. And in a weird way, it's cathartic. I think he feels like he deserves this punishment because, when you see the film, there's something that's happened in his past that makes him want to harm himself and he can't really connect to everyone around him. I think he almost feels that he deserves to die so he can stir death in the face and absolutely spit back at it. I love that the hero is consumed with anger. I think that metal and death metal can serve a lot of people, and it's like you get a sense that this guy has the ability to defend himself and possibly kill another man, but I had to subvert what usually happens with protagonists and antagonists and make it so the hero was this guy who's into "the Devil's music." And then our antagonist is into the Top 40 bubble.

**A huge aspect of the film that makes it work is the incredibly phantasmagoric cast. Tell us about some of the principal actors in the**





You're going  
from this  
shiny, happy  
world to  
literally the  
dark depths  
of hell.

—LEAH LYNN

**Oh, beginning with Robin McLeavy who plays Lulu?**

The *Lower Class* is a stylized teen horror film and it's kind of aspirational casting. [These are] not your classic Lacey Chabert [style, Bully] teenagers. This is the type of cast that kids will look at and go, "Yeah, they're really cool. I wanna be that person." But Lulu, in particular, I mean Robin McLeavy, is just a revelation. She came into the audition and she was absolutely amazing. She has the vulnerability of [Sissy Spacek's] Carrie, she has the sadness of Anne Wilson [Kathy Bates from *Alfango*], and she's got that spunky little daddy's girl quality of Winona Ryder. Horror is about archetypes. Everyone has to look great, but more important to me was actually finding a depth, so I wanted everyone to give a really layered performance.

**Kiefer Sutherland wants to star in one of the *Twilight* sequels. How does he impact the perception and profile of *The Lower Class*?**

[Laughs] Such a phenomenon that it's so close to instant awareness amongst the more passionate fans who are into following up on the stars involved, and I think that's a positive thing because I've always felt the film has crossover appeal to teenagers. The more the merrier, I say! Kiefer's a really lovely guy and an extremely talented actor, and I hope the film's North American release puts a spotlight on him and makes his performance a pretty amazing, I think. It's not easy to sell such an obscure character arc with your voice stolen away and [when you've] tied to a chair for 90 percent of the movie.

**I want to ask you about the actor's journey that I've sure must feel bloody and and a larger percentage of the female in the audience will feel in love with when they get in one hour Jessica McManus, who plays beautiful vampire Mia.**

Well, Jessica McManus has quite a high profile in Australia. I can't really reveal too much, so it would give away one of the twists, but she plays a part in the parallel prism. Like, we've got Brent and we've got Princess and we've got the hell that's going on in the prism under the mirror ball in a farmhouse in the middle of nowhere, whereas Mia is at the real profit but she's got a particularly happy person. You know, she's just like a really fucking cool girl with a broken wing and you have to keep watching the film to understand why, but I think she's gonna be the wet dream for so many guys out there. She's kind of this absolutely Angelina Jolie-esque, gothic chick that can drink and smooch you under the table and doesn't take a backward step. She just sticks a middle finger up at the world.



**Bad Daddy** (top left) and "Princess" with her bloodsucker (left) and Jessica McManus as Mia.

**Lulu's dad is another unusual character in the film. Tell me about the actor who plays him.**

John Beaupre plays Lulu's dad, a Mr. "Daddy." Because Princess and Daddy have to work as a tag team and Princess is dramatic as hell, I thought to balance that I needed someone who was quietly menacing, that you could see sitting at the end of the table and you'd think, "What the hell is going on behind those eyes?" No matter how deeply you look into them, all you see is some kind of empty well. Most of the actors that came in had a tendency to overplay the role and to try to play the psycho and grab the part, whereas John had the confidence to just be. And he has the coolest eyes I've ever seen. He used to be a boxer. He's got a very intimidating kind of physicality.

**There's a moment where he gives his daughter a prom dress, then watches her change into it. But I thought what was tremendous about it was the way it was filmed: It was awkward, painful and perverse all at the same time. Was there a person where you played with how far to take that scene and to what degree you would still sympathize with him at that moment?**

**Snowtown** MINES ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST SHOCKING CRIMES FOR ITS BLEAK STORY OF MANIPULATION AND MALFEASANCE

# A Monster Manipulator

by TIL GORE-MET

**THE PHRASE "BASED ON TRUE EVENTS"** has been so overused in horror film marketing that it doesn't mean much anymore. But if any film could reclaim those four words, it's *Snowtown*.

On May 29, 1988, after a year-long investigation spurred by a missing person report, South Australia Police entered a disused bank vault in the rural village of Snowtown, 150 km north of Adelaide, and made a horrific discovery: six plastic barrels filled with acid and the bodies and body parts of eight people. The case was dubbed the "Snobs in Kermis" murders by the media. The following day, John Burdett and Robert Jay Wagner were arrested and charged in the deaths.

Then, following the most extensive criminal investigation in Australian history, Burdett was charged with an additional four murders, Wagner three (one count was later dropped due to a lack of evidence). Burdett's teenage stepson, James "Junior" Wesslake, confessed to involvement in three of the killings and testified for the state. Another acquaintance, Mark Haydon, was charged in two. All told, seven people were involved in Burdett's murder spree. Two of the other accomplices, Brian Lane and Thomas Trevelyan, were later killed by Burdett and Wagner; and Wesslake's mother, Elizabeth, ran away but allegedly participated in one of the murders, died of cancer before the trial.

*Snowtown* was a self-styled vigilante who rallied residents of the poverty-stricken Adelaide suburbs of North Salisbury against people he considered brutal and manipulative and perverted. It was a local film, not only reflecting the locale, but also the tone, mood, and disposal of his victims, but also in reflecting the government of his benevolent paymasters.

"I think everyone was in a bit of shock at the extent of the murders, and I guess at some of the details of the brutality and brutality connected to them," explains Justin Kurzel, director of *Snowtown*, the notoriously grim film inspired by Burdett's crimes. "I think they were kind of disbelieving at a little bit of a break story, a cold story. There wasn't much perspective going into the reasons why, and the kind of community and area of which they resided. I definitely don't know when [the crimes] were first reported [about] the kind of relationship between John and James, another aspect the case was because there were four female victims as opposed to just one."

*Snowtown* is Kurzel's eighth feature as director. He first gained attention in the Australian film industry when he managed to make his debut student film, *Blue Rhythms* (which depicts *Snowtown*'s dissection of dependent

youth,毒品和subculture and violence towards animals), was selected in 2005 to screen during Cannes Critics' Week, which was alongside the world-famous Cannes Film Festival, before being offered *Snowtown* out of the blue, by producer Anna Melikian.

"There was an incredible relationship between this kid and the kind of film—people who's world he's in," he recalls. "I'd never read anything like this before and had no idea this existed in the actual case. I told her I came from the States and was intrigued and came up with a vision for the film, which was to tell it from the inside out and go back and forth in the place where it happened and what was there. They were keen and felt it would benefit the film as we moved around it."

Kurzel rewrote the script with Simon Grant, who wrote the original draft. They started with three books that had been written on the crimes and two documentaries. Kurzel had been so focused on "this monster and the violence," and eventually pared down the narrative from the book after they were awarded by the court. They then went to the neighborhood and interviewed people who actually knew the real-life counterparts of the principal characters. The resulting script had a decidedly unorthodox narrative structure.

"It was originally written as more of a conventional genre film, of bad police and a cool young sequel where they're investigated, and was told through a couple more points of view," says Kurzel. "One thing I felt was strongest in the script and that Shane was really excited about: was it completely told from the point of view of James. That disturbed the narrative. Obviously the murders could only be revealed as they were revealed to James, but given the impact to the work with the narrative we wanted to explore with the script. Hopefully this film is a little bit more from an observation of the facts, but also [shows] the internal world of the perpetrators, as opposed to the objective, sensational details of the murders."

The most disturbing aspect about *Snowtown* is the nature of it: it's not a movie about violent serial killers; it's an unfolding gaze into an abyss of human misery. Kurzel shot the film just blocks away from where the murders actually took place, and the cast is comprised mostly of local residents. The most professional actor is Daniel Henshall (pictured above), who is brilliant as John, Richard Gray, who portrays Barry is the only other actor with any experience. It was a last-minute twist to cast young Biba as the film but it paid off, particularly with *Little Boy* (played by James). The documentary he portrayed in *Little Boy* was used to accompany below this world's real "Kurzel says all of his work." So this is a really kind of film in seeing certain misadventures or experiences or communities as a film appropriated by really high-profile actors. I just



**Eye for An Eye:** John Burdett kept his Australian reputation by inflicting a slaying of Troy (Anthony Geary).

*"I wanted the audience to be disoriented by the violence."*  
JUSTIN KURZEL

felt this film needed to be completely and utterly authentic and immersive and visceral, and you are very much seduced into this world. That was the main reason I wanted the cast to be non-actors, when you instantly have sympathy for them, and their humanity you see within the world, within the way they look and the expressions on their faces. That's the thing on outside persons into that environment, meaning Daniel, kind of memory what happened in real life. John was from Adelaide, which is in Queensland, a different state, and he came into the community as an outsider. Daniel is an actor from Sydney who came into the community. He was also doing a soap opera for a long time and different roles, a lot of people in the community recognized him, so as soon as he came in he was doing a narrative and people really gravitated towards him. He had a very kind of off-the-cuff charisma going on. I think that dynamic was supporting there, and then while we were shooting, he really mirrored James's charisma."

There are obvious aspects to the crimes—horror, entertainment and exploitation—but a deeper filmmaker would have realized, but Kurzel consciously chose not to. He only depicts one of the heinous murders, using it to demonstrate just how much John and James overcame, and what he had to do to achieve it. He was a monster, but he was a man, and he was a man who was suffering. "I didn't want it to be a horror film or a slasher film," he says. "I wanted the audience to be disoriented by the violence so they'd have a compass towards the violence in the film. I needed to be incredibly real, it needed to have some and the audience needed to be connected to the journey of James."

That particular murder in the graphic torture and strangulation of James's half-brother Troy Burke, which had actually lasted five minutes over two days of portraits over minutes of real time in the movie. Kurzel concedes it was the most difficult scene to shoot. "We had to be clever and have to get right back to it, but I think it was a very good thing, especially for a kid who's never worked before and is suddenly involved in a highly intense, emotional scene such as that."

Over the film's subject matter and the near-documentary aesthetic, *Snowtown* has endured comparisons to *Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986), but Kurzel is quick to dispel those. "It's a film I really respect, but it's definitely wasn't a film I was looking about when I was making *Snowtown*. There are probably many Australian films, like *The Boys of Bush* or *Wake in Fright*, which would probably be more influential. But in a debate way just sitting in the back of my mind. It's that Australian masculinity that probably had a more direct effect on the violent nature of *Snowtown*, and how the Australian male is explored and represented in movies."



**Big Screen:** David (Anthony Geary) murdered David.

There was no way to do it any other way, it's not doing everything for his daughter but he needs on the perception of society. He doesn't have a lot of contact with the real world. He has his beautiful daughter there, she's growing into a woman, she's getting changed in front of him. He tries to do the right thing. He tries to leave the room. She says him to come back. I think, in a way, she's trying to tell him, and you just have to be honest about it. I mean, she's getting changed and he's looking and it tells him that he's looking at her dead. And that's the character as we had to go there otherwise it would've felt really fake. Interestingly, it's such a point of view-driven scene because the camera is David's eyes and we just had to be true to where the male gaze goes.

*There's a sense of a metaphorical, a metaphorical point of view in the last couple of years, and exactly the documentary that David (Anthony Geary) put into a house one of the victims, and this was the way of the film.*

There's a sense of the victim, the victim. You gotta have films that make money, and everything goes in. At the moment, the funding bodies are looking for things that are more, there have been some competitors and we've got a great history of Australian crime and I think those films that were in *Not Quite Hollywood*, like *Mad Max* and *Accused*, and *Dracula* by Greg (McLennan) and myself and James Banks, we're all directors of that era, and so I think it's typical. I think of movies where that we depicted it as kids and now it's being told from the other side.

*The Australian landscape (Snowtown) seems to be a major piece of film for many of the country's horror films. And this is reflected in The Last House on the Left. What are your thoughts regarding the importance of nature and the land to the Australian horror film?*

Isolation, historically, was given a characteristic of Australian horror. When you're in the middle of the desert, there's a sense of isolation because they give on the country's harsh, wide-open spaces and the fact that you could be easily disappear and no one would know. Even *Panic at the Edge of the World*, which is really quite lyrical and haunting and stylistically different to most genre films, fits in the sense that you could easily vanish.

*I think the most interesting thing about the film, which is also a horror, is the perception that John and James had of the world.*



**Monster Movie:** Justin Kurzel's *Snowtown* is a horror film that is a masterpiece.

GREG MCLEAN CHECKS IN ABOUT HIS *Wolf Creek* SEQUEL, AND WHY AUSTRALIA BREEDS KILLER MOVIES ABOUT HUMAN MONSTERS

# Yer Dead Meat, Mate

by A.S. BERMAN

**N**O ONE HAS DONE MORE FOR THE AUSSIE HORROR BRAND in the 21st century than director Greg McLean, whose 2005 shocker *Wolf Creek* injected the humble slasher film with a stunning backdrop and visual flare that seduces the eye while its imagery cries for you to look away.

"Though the sequel to *Wolf Creek* [RNC2] was briefly sidelined by a public tiff with backer DreamWorks Edelstein over his decision to hold back the \$5 million he'd pledged, it will shoot this year or next depending on financing and actor availability," says McLean. "It's a very ambitious project for a horror movie sequel, but I'm committed to doing something really unique with it."

Though reluctant to get into specifics, McLean does suggest an intriguing approach to his Outback killer Mick Taylor (played by John Jarratt, pictured below): "Certainly there's something 'inhuman' in the levels of evil he's capable of, which suggests to me they have some deeper power running directly from the Outback itself into his twisted, feralized soul. We are currently creating a series of *Wolf Creek* novels, and they very much explore this territory and questions about his character, origin and source of his evil."

This idea of the Outback — and more generally the continent itself — having a heart of darkness may go some way toward explaining the best in Australian horror, including *Wolf Creek* and McLean's 2007 killer-cow film *Rogue*, but also treasures such as the nature-themed films *Long Weekend* (1976), *Hazards* (1984) and *Black Water* (2006), and harrier psycho movies *Road to Nowhere* (1989), *Van Dammes Land* (2006) and *The Loved Ones* (2010). Even the most celebrated Australian film of all time, Peter Weir's 1995 *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, explores this idea with a tale of a student and teacher simply vanishing in the remote terrain.

"I think it has to do with the formation myths and cultural subconscious of how this nation was formed," McLean says. "Essentially, Australia was a prison dumping ground for the scum of England. So people were literally dropped in this uncolonized fl' with no escape to try to survive as best they could. So nature and the landscape as a place of fear, the unknown and danger is burned into our cultural souls. Children who got 'lost' in the bush were seldom found. Explorers who strayed off paths died. In the scorching sun, and madness who broke off from the settlement or went crazy were always lurking in the shadows."

That ungodly shadowy part of the country's psyche just settles away, waiting to explode every now and then in racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and vigilante. That's what these movies and stories are referring to in my opinion — the conflict between ideology and civilization. It's certainly at the heart of *Picnic* and *The Loved Ones*. It seems to me, and that's really what *Wolf Creek* is about, Mick Taylor is a character who epitomizes the idea."

with the sun is shining. That *Wolf Creek* was depicted the grade of meat sector movie, which takes place in the desert.

But so does much of *The Loved Ones* ends up feeling uniquely Australian because that's my cultural heritage and it's naturally ingrained. It's just that I came up the story from a character angle first and then that led to choosing locations rather than locations being the original source of inspiration like they are for a lot of films.

*It's back a few years before you saw John in *Devil at Midnight*, with the film. Why the delay in seeing a release of the movie in North America?*

It's been along — at times frustrating — road but like the old saying goes, good things come to those who wait. What people don't know is *The Loved Ones* had US offers from day one. It was a hell of a lot stronger smaller labels, all of which I respect and admire, and then a couple of majors lifted with it before Paramount finally came to the party. The reason the production company didn't take any of the offers is because they always believed the film had genuine broad appeal. I guess they were prepared to risk it all for the chance of hitting the jackpot. And who knows whether that will happen. Mine can be a lottery, but Paramount Image has a pretty good track record when it comes to releasing low-budget horror so the movie couldn't be a better bet. At least we've got a fighting chance now.

*What sort of audience will it get over here?*

It's coming out in June [in the US] through Tugg, which is a collective action platform allowing anyone who wants to see the movie to bring it to their area. All you need to do is go to [TheLovedOnesWebsite.com](http://TheLovedOnesWebsite.com) and sign up by typing in your email and zip code, and then the film will come

These Gravy Kids: Lids tops into Devil's up for a giant photo before breaking out the power tools



to you! After that, the plan is to gradually go wider, a bit similar to how *Paranormal Activity* was released.

*Finally, are you serious the entire family member?*

I definitely wasn't sick to my stomach, but I'd like to jump around different genres. I think my thing is always going to be to try to take a formula that everyone's aware of and try to add something new to that world to start and then slowly run the formula off the rails a little bit. My approach to this film was almost the opposite of *Inverness*. I mean, *Inverness* was such an amazing film, and it starts off so confronting and challenging. But I wanted to start in quite an untypical teen world and then, when the audience aren't even expecting it, I wanted to prep up and drop a tap of acid into everyone's soda and take them into some kind of Lychlike madness, but hopefully do it without contrivance and so that the narrative logic still holds true.



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WITH A WHOLE BATCH OF **MARS ATTACKS** CARDS ON DECK, THE CO-CREATOR OF THE ORIGINAL SERIES HELPS US UNEARTH THE HISTORY OF THE GORY COLLECTIBLES THAT SCANDALIZED AMERICAN YOUTH

# THE INVASION BEGINS... AGAIN!

BY APRIL SNELLINGS



**OVER THE PAST HALF-CENTURY, TRADING CARD GIANT TOPPS HAS TAUGHT US TWO THINGS ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOURS FROM THE RED PLANET. ONE:** Martians are assholes. Given half a chance, they'll dominate our cities, kidnap our women and barbecue our dogs. **TWO:** They're persistent. In spite of the parents' chiding and CIO's sales that produced the first *Mars Attacks* trading card kit in 1967, Topps' *Martians*—and several generations of fans—keep coming back for more. This year, the company celebrates the 50th anniversary of the franchise with a full-scale merchandise blitz that includes action figures, plush toys, model kits, an ongoing comic book series from IDW Publishing and, of course, a new stack of trading cards.



*Mars Attacks* was originally created by Len Brown and Woody Gelman (1945–1970), a pair of Topps employees tasked with filling in the gaps between the company's popular baseball and football card lines in the early '60s. Though *Mars Attacks* direct predecessor is the famously bloody 1961 card set *Civil War* (also known as *Civil War Revolt*), the sci-fi franchise can trace its lineage to an even earlier card set, *Guns*, an 18-illustration 1958 card set that documented purported atrocities committed in various conflicts between World War I

"Woody was a great card collector, and he had collections of cards from the 1930s and '40s," recalls the 71-year-old Brown, who enjoyed a career at Topps that spanned 41 years and included a long run as the company's creative director. "One day, he brought in this series of old cards called *The Menace of War*—it's pretty bizarre, these cards for me gone and evidence."

Perhaps "evidence" is a better word. The *Menace of War* was a 16-card children, but lacked parental approval due to the graphic depictions of death and destruction that were accompanied by titles such as "Japanese Apply Torch to Dead Prisoner" and "Big Girls Kill Minded Children of Piss."

Brown recalls one card from the series with remarkable clarity: "We just couldn't get over it. It had a headless body, and there was a close-up of a girl on the side, and in the foreground, we were just these hands that were cut off of the wrist with guns hanging out of them. I don't know if we ever did anything else that intense when we were doing these things, but Woody said, 'Kids love guns! Maybe we can do a series based on the Civil War, and do it this way.'"

The *Civil War* cards sold extremely well and even earned kudos from *Time* magazine, in spite of the fact that the barbed descriptions were mostly the product of Brown's imagination. Brown and Gelman were looking to repeat that success, since both men were and science fiction fans, it wasn't long before someone suggested a

gory trading card set on H.G. Wells' classic 1898 novel *War of the Worlds*, which was a public domain property and, therefore, free game.

"We kept asking ourselves, what are the typical science fiction magazines that the readers do?" Brown remembers. "There were just *Amazing*, *The Incredible*, *Amazing*, all that stuff." We incorporated as much of that into the *Mars Attacks* series. There was a lot of blood and guts in it, and it was exciting for the kids."

Brown and Gelman came up with a story that was essentially an abridged version of Wells' sci-fi staples. *Mars Attacks* featured flying saucers, freaky aliens, acid rain, and a madhouse robot and an alien that included headless and shark-like along with the Martians' use of weapons of choice: the all-purpose death-ray. Topps recreated famed comic book artist Wally Wood (1927–1981) to do the initial sketches—a choice that was perfectly fitting, since one of Brown's key inspirations for the look of the cards was *Wally's* 1963 cover for *EC Comics' Weird Science #18*. *Mars Attacks* also stuck to subterranean Martians instead of being a mash-up of the alien invaders from that cover and the *Mohawk* Martians from the 1965 *Star Trek* *Enterprise* Earth.

Though Wood struck gold with his *Martian* invasion design, most of the sketches were passed over in favor of the lighter, more dramatic, and less gory, by fellow comic book legend Bob Finkel (1915–1987), who also did the pencil work for the *Civil War* cards. The final *Mars Attacks* team member was another *Civil War* veteran: prolific pulp artist Mance Saunders (1907–1999), who initially worked for Topps doing hand-colored color touch-ups on the artwork of baseball players who had been traded after they were photographed by their cards. He pointed over Powell's pencil work to produce the striking, dark-colored artwork that would become a *Mars Attacks* trademark.

The story was simple: Having exhausted their own planet's resources, the Martians moved a full-scale attack on Earth. The brave little stars could withstand destruction before an inter-



**"THERE WAS A LOT OF BLOOD AND GUTS IN IT, AND IT WAS EXCITING FOR THE KIDS."**  
LEN BROWN



**19 BURNING FLESH**

**Zoom!** In contrast of original *Mars Attacks* with alien invasions, *Woody's* *War of the Worlds* is a full-scale attack on Earth. *Woody's* *War of the Worlds* is a full-scale attack on Earth. *Woody's* *War of the Worlds* is a full-scale attack on Earth.





Tim Marlowe, DC: Examples of new retro-style *Mars Attacks* cards by Jason Edmister, inspired by the *Willy Wonka* sketches they're based on, and *Quincy* and *right Civil War*. *Mars Attacks* and *Battle* cards

at this only a few months after its successful test run, "Topps' first *Martian* invasion ended with a whimper instead of a bang. Brown and Gelman, once again with Saunders and Powell in tow, would retry their formula in 1995 with the World War II-themed *Battle*—a card set that Brown sees as the end of an era.

"Given that, *Mars Attacks* and *Battle* are almost a trilogy in a way," Brown says. "No lies, that was the golden age of Topps adventure cards."

Topps' Marlowe kept their heads down until the cards were reprinted in 1994 and 1999. By the time 1995 rolled around, the company had a bona fide cult following on their hands, which led the company to issue a 100-card "infinite" set that included reprints of the original series, as well as dozens of new cards by a number of artists, including Norm Saunders' daughter, Zina. The '90s also saw a number of *Mars Attacks* comic books from Topps' now-defunct comic book division, along with Tim Burton's feature film adaptation. Though Burton's film was both a critical and box-office disappointment, it finally put *Mars Attacks* on the mainstream map.

"People know *Mars Attacks* from the movie more often than not," Brown points out. "Most

people don't even know it was a card set. It's always struck by how many people tell me that *Mars Attacks* is their favorite science fiction movie, and I sort of wonder. Compared to the great science fiction movies, *Mars Attacks* was just a spoof—a silly little thing. I remember when the movie started I thought, 'Oh, my goodness, this is going to be fabulous!' And then the camp came in, right down to Sheri Winlow's giggling killing the Martians. I just grin and bear it. It's happy it was made and I'm glad I had something to do with it."

Topps' 50th anniversary revival of the property will follow a similar format to the '90s rewrap. An ongoing comic book series, penned by Chew comic book scribe John Layman and illustrated by John McNair, launches this month (see sidebar), with a new card set hitting the street in July. Besides reprints of the original cards, the new set will include 10 new cards by McNair and ten new cards by Toronto-based artist Jason Edmister. While McNair's cards will be strictly new creations, Edmister's are based on Willy Wonka's unused concept sketches left over from the original 1962 series.

"They were pretty rough—basically just concept and action, but not much in the form of lighting or details," Edmister says of Wonka's sketches. "We could tell generally what was going on, but they needed to be finished out. I shot reference pictures for the designs after I worked out the composition a bit, to make them work in perspective and to give them more drama. I posed for most of the main figures, and my wife for the few female characters." (It's interesting to note that Saunders did the same thing, using himself and his family as models for his *Mars Attacks* paintings. In fact, it was the Saunders family porch, Cindy, who ended up as the business end of a ray-gun in "Destroying a Dog.")

While McNair's cards will be into the modern-day story that will play out in DC's comic book, Edmister's will fill in gaps between cards in the original series. Since Edmister, like Saunders, is known for his high-contrast style and vibrant color palette, he's a natural choice to expand the vintage world at *Mars Attacks*. He promises to give the franchise's fans everything they've

come to expect over the past 50 years.

"When the scene calls for it, my cards have as much or more gore and violence than the originals," Edmister says. "I was surprised by the content of the designs, but happy as hell to paint 'em. I always loved violent art. I don't know what it is about it because I can't stand the sight of real-life blood and gore, but illustrated carnage always has me riveted. The greater, the better."

Though Brown retired from Topps in 2000, the company has once again recruited him to save the world from the *Martian* onslaught. He originally wanted to update the *Mars Attacks* universe for a contemporary audience, however that task has ultimately fallen to Layman. Instead, Brown has written the copy for the backs of Edmister's cards.

"I never would have imagined I'd still be working on *Mars Attacks* 50 years later," he admits. "There are these gaps of time, and you get recharged and it's always fun to get started again. It's like visiting an old friend after so many years. When I was working on these ten cards now, I tried to write them in the same style as the cards I wrote in the '60s. So much time has passed since the last time I worked on it, it was fresh again. I was excited to go back to it." 



**"CIVIL WAR, MARS ATTACKS AND BATTLE ARE ALMOST A TRILOGY!"**

**LEN BROWN**

DOLPH LUNDGREN

# RED SCORPION



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ZOMBIE SLAUGHTER  
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ARE PUSHED TO  
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# MINISKIRT MASSACRE

by MONICA S. KUEBLER AND JESSA GARCIA

**WHAT DO A CHAINSAW-WIELDING CHEERLEADER, PILES OF DECAPITATED ZOMBIES AND BIG SPARKLY RAINBOWS HAVE IN COMMON?** They

are all essential, though contrary, ingredients of *Lollipop Chainsaw*, the second-up berserk teen child of remnant video game director Suda51 (*Gothic*, *Prinny*, *Shadow of the Colossus*) and hilariously twisted screenwriter James Gunn (*Dave* of the *Dead* remake, *Sideways*, *Super*).

It's not just another school day at San Romero High School and Juliet Starling—your in-game alter ego—is not your average cheerleader. She's a sexy, miniskirt-clad, smart-aleck zombie hunter, who's stuck chainsaw-mowing her way through the horde of walkouts (a.k.a. her now-converted former classmates) that have overrun her

school, while toting along the severed head of her boyfriend Nick, in the hopes of trying to, uh, salvage the pieces of their relationship.

"*Lollipop Chainsaw* is your basic boy-meets-girl, boy-and-girl-fall-in-love, boy-becomes-irving-disappointed-hero, and boy-and-girl-have-to-work-this-shit-out-kind-of story," says Gunn, who wrote the game's script. "It's a love story, at the heart of it all. That's something we'd laugh about while working on the game—at the heart of this incredibly violent, vile, dark-humored game is a very sweet, simple love story."

Of course, Juliet is also the only one who can potentially save the world at large from a zombie apocalypse. Not exactly the kind of subject you can cuss for, but sometimes it's all about the attitude.

"You ever meet one of those people who's positive about everything, and puts an optimistic spin on any negative thing that happens, no matter

for what it is?" asks Gunn. "Not because they're in denial, but because they just have an organically optimistic attitude towards the world? Juliet is that person, times a thousand. She's a little cynicopea in this way, but ultimately likeable. Many, many, many characters have killed zombies over the years - I don't think any of them have been quite as exuberant about it as Juliet."

The third-person horror-comedy actioner (out June 12 from WB Games for Xbox 360 and PS3) plays perfectly into her perky personality with its super-saturated graphic design, which features hyper-saturated special effects in the form of explosive rainbow-colored kill sequences. Producer Scott Miller attributes these unusual elements (in a horror title, at least) to creative director Suda51's impulse to think outside the box when it comes to designing games. "[He] likes to come up with over-the-top, unique ideas for his audience," says Miller. "The fact that this is such a simple idea but yet has never been done before is just amazing."

And humor is as important as gore to the proceedings, as evidenced by the blood and rainbows that spill out of the zombies when they are wounded. In fact, multi-colored blood comedy permeates all elements of the game, including combat, dialogue and character design. Which brings us back to the bearded boyfriend, who does out game tips along with campy relationship misadventures. Nick keeps the action moving and provides opportunities for more than a few jokes.

"Juliet's boyfriend Nick is actually as important to the game as Juliet," explains Gunn. "He's the Abbott to her Costello, only a sexually frustrated Abbott who wants to have sex with Costello, but he doesn't have a penis... Juliet is also able to cut off the head of a zombie and put Nick's head on [its neck stump] so that he has momentary control of a body, which is fun. Nick is voiced by Michael Rosenbaum, who a lot of people know as Lex Luthor on *Smallville*."

Other voice talent in *Lollipop Chainsaw* that comes courtesy of Gunn's Hollywood connections include horror thrives Michael Rooker (Gibbs) and Skarline Smith (Gale), as well as Linda Cardellini (TV's *Friends* and *Greys*; *Goodnight's* Amy), Gregg Henry (TV's *Rage*, *Silver*) and Jimmy Kimmel (singer for electropunk band *Wendless Self Indulgence*), who also composed the game's score.

## THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO INCLUDE IN MY MOVIES THAT WAS TOO EXPENSIVE.

**JAMES GUNN**

But casting wasn't the only way Gunn's previous filmmaking experience helped with the project; he found it no asset to writing the game's script as well.

"Storytelling is pretty similar from form to form, whether it's screenwriting, novel-writing, television or games. It's mostly the breadth that changes," he explains, citing the well-written character arcs and dialogue of *Final Dead Reckoning* and *Grand Theft Auto*. As for sources of inspiration for *Lollipop Chainsaw*? "What was fun about writing a video game was that it's so big. The script is probably five times the size of a screenplay, so I faced a lot of freedom in that. I think they liked me to write the cut scenes and oversee the rest, but I tell you in love with the game I ended up writing every single piece of dialogue in it."

As for the gimmicky stuff, Suda51 is the one primarily responsible for the juxtaposition of hyper-cute with gruesome gore, but he was also the mastermind behind the cheerleader-with-a-chainsaw concept.

"She was a cheerleader when I got there," says Gunn. "Both Suda and I are very interested in clashing tones - the dark and the light, the evil and the innocent, and, in this game especially, the gory and the cute."

But even if *Lollipop Chainsaw* is more hilarious than terrifying, it's still a zombie game, meaning that monsters get plenty of screen time, in all manner of weird designs.

"Suda51 is very well known for his over-the-top boss fights. James was able to kind of [lead] and bring in some more over-the-top story to go along with it," continues Miller. "Each zombie boss is based off of a musical theme with characters such as The Who's Metal boss and the Psycho-Pink-themed boss."



Game A "Z": (from top) Juliet shows off her killer routine, and two rounds of chainsaw carnage, now with more rainbow colours!



Gunn elaborates further: "Chicken zombies, cow zombies, Rick James-like zombies, pink rock zombies... there are a plethora of zombies for horror fans to enjoy."

He even got to throw some gore gauges into the game that he wasn't able to do in his films.

"There's a lot of stuff I've always wanted to include in my movies that was too expensive," he explains. "I mean, in *Sleight* I had this enormous zombie deer scene with tons of zombie deer attacking Nathan Fillion's character. But, because of budget, we had to scale back to one feisty, crappy zombie deer in *Lollipop Chainsaw*, so we have zombie animals all over the place! It's rule!"

As for dispatching the others — humans, animals and otherwise — decapitation works (and does more than three at a time thanks to gameplay perks), so does building up cheerleading zombie moves to spackle their undead brains out, but Juliet's chainsaw is also capable of transforming into a gun, and Mack's head can be weaponized as well, though he's not quite as thrilled about this as Juliet is. ("Who wants their head shot out of a head-shooting shotgun at a zombie horde?" Gunn asks. "Not me.")

Despite the promise of zombie-slurping action and gratuitous glee-gore, how-

ever, one can't help but wonder if the scanty clothing of *Lollipop Chainsaw*'s heroine is downright snoot: (A model hired to portray the character was asked to leave a convention recently after complaints about her skimpy outfit.) Gunn assures that this is not the case.

"I think we've already seen a huge amount of female gamers who have reacted positively to Juliet. She's a strong, awesome chick who is also incredibly sexy. I'd say about 85 percent of the questions I've got on Twitter and Facebook about the game have come from females. What this says about my badass versus the game, I don't really know. I really like writing female characters. Whether it's Elsie Page in *Super, Elizabeth Banks* in *Sleight* or Sarah Polley in *Dance of the Dead*, I think these are some of the most memorable characters that I've helped to give birth to, and Juliet is right there with them."

And that's not the only thing he's proud of, either.

"I honestly think *Lollipop Chainsaw* may be the funniest game ever," he boasts. "I suppose that's a self-serving thing to say, since the dialogue was written by me — but, what the hell, I do! We didn't hold back on anything — the humor goes too far, as does the violence, the insanity, all of it. That said, I think we got away with a lot of gore in this game because we're 'humorous.'"

## SHE SLAYS PIXELS THE BUNNYT VIBES

PRESENTING FIVE VIDEO GAME VIXENS THAT LEAD THE CHARGE IN STYLE, SMARTS AND KICKING ASS



### AYKA BASK

*Infamous* (PS3)

This luscious brown NYPD officer has the attitude and chops to combat any evildoer, no matter how many tentacles or how many heads she's got. Equipped with robust tactical powers and sharp wit, Ayka is emphatically responsible for saving the whole of humanity from certain destruction. Even as the face of imminent disaster, she's ready to counter with an all-out offensive — complete with rocket launcher. Plus, she's always looked killer in a simple jeans outfit, and we love her all the more for it.



### JILL VALENTINE

*Resident Evil* (PS2)

From investigating Arklay Mansion (in the original RE) to suffering a heart-wrenching job after being controlled by Wesker (in RE5), Jill Valentine remains the original horror heroine: headstrong, resourceful and a "master of snickering." Jill's the girl you get on your team with her badass kung-fu tap and instant combo that launched a thousand copycats. From game to game, Jill holds a well-deserved place in our memories — and yes, we definitely want to pick her up.



### HEATHER MASON

*Silent Hill 2* (PS2)

Being a teenager is tough enough, but when you're up against a bizarre cult leader who wants to reprogram you with his God, you risk being scarred for life. (Stress you're Heather Mason, the shipwrecked adopted daughter of the original *Silent Hill*'s protagonist. She's got an answer for everything, and rather than wandering helplessly in the nightmare worlds in which she finds herself, she ventures forth in search of salvation. One of the first ladies of horror gaming, and a standout example of a strong female lead who isn't easily shaken.



### ALICE LINDVALL

*American McGee's Alice* (PS2)

American McGee painted a disturbing picture of Wonderland that was somehow still less depressing than Alice's reality. Despite our heroine's crumbling sanity, she really works her damn ass out of humor and killer goth style — striped socks and flossing along hair, not to mention that alluring accent. No other ingredients are necessary for a gorgeous young woman who isn't afraid to pick up a moral blade and jump at a low Guard — and all in the name of mental health, you know.



### ZOELY

*Left 4 Dead* (PS3)

This red-head-cled university student is a no-nonsense, trash-talking zombie slayer who oozes that "everywoman" vibe. She's effortlessly cool and undeniably sexy despite society crumbling to pieces around her. The first to pop off with a pointed one-liner after headshooting a Witch and the last to ad around and morn about the apocalypse, Zoey's tough-gal charm is tough to beat. She's got your back, even if it means turning through a spray of phosmex to save the day.

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With a fan-favourite **Twilight Zone** collection hitting Blu-ray, legendary screen scribe George Clayton Johnson details his uncanny contributions to the series

# TELLER OF STRANGE TALES

by Michael Doyle

A

CON ARTIST WITH THE ABILITY TO ALTER HIS FACE AT WILL, A GAME OF POOL WITH ETERNITY AT STAKE; A WOUNDED COP WHO MIGHT RE DEATH ITSELF; A COTERIE OF ELDERLY PEOPLE MAGICALLY RELIVING THEIR LOST YOUTH THROUGH CHILDREN'S GAMES. These are the extraordinary imaginings of George Clayton Johnson who—along with his contemporaries Rod Serling, Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont—formed the creative core of the *Twilight Zone*. Few of his screen stories have been awarded the honor as a Best of *Twilight Zone* Fan Favorite (just June 6), which has won him reviews of the show's greatest episodes. Taking a break from *Jeopardy!*, a beloved series to *Jeopardy!*, the iconic novel he co-authored with William F. Nolan, the 82-year-old writer discusses his episodes in the new collection.

Tell me about the first of your *Twilight Zone* stories to be broadcast, "The Four of Us Are Dying."

The written story called "All of Us Are Dying," which concerned a man who could literally change his face to look like anyone. I then had a meeting with Jay Richards, who was head of the television department at the great place *Paramount Pictures Agency*. I showed Jay this story and watched in horror as he scribbled out the title with a ballpoint pen and wrote the word "Rebirth" in place of it. I thought that title cheapened this story and might even offend Rod Serling and cause him to reject it. Apparently it didn't, and Jay came back saying, "Rod has offered you \$2500 for the story. He wants to adapt it for a new show called *The Twilight Zone*." I quickly said, "Say yes!" The title was then changed to "The Four of Us Are Dying," thank God.

What was Serling like?

That was a splendid fellow. What he said is what he meant and what he meant is what he said. I wrote an appreciation of Rod that was published in a collection of stories called *Red's Light House*, in which I tried to capture my feelings about him. His intellect and character and also about the show itself. I had a deep love and respect for Rod and felt the same way about the producer, Buck Houghton. Buck was one half of a guy and I loved him

as if I gathered a lot of my behavior around Rod and Buck because I found them both to be men of honor.

Another of your most celebrated episodes is "Is There a God in the Sky?"

After writing that story, I had traveled to Montreal to make *The Invader*. I then started getting phone calls from Buck saying, "Rod has got me ideas for an episode to put around your story. If you want, here, he'd ask you to write it, but since you're not, he's going to do it." I said, "Please don't change anything!" Buck said, "Too bad." I got back and immediately went to the studio and read the new script. I thought it was fine but I read it and I couldn't do it. I was sitting up. Rod had added the idea of *Time Machine* (Winning) writing in a ghostly Limbo for the new kid on the block, Jesse (Jack Klavorn), to challenge him, whereas he implicitly appears to *Edith* to play a game of *Jeopardy!* eventually wins and becomes the big legend himself and is last seen writing at the table in Limbo for his next challenge.

For original endings, where Jesse loses, now rendered in the 1988 version produced for *The New Twilight Zone*.

I thought the version with a tape-me tape machine. I liked that ending because Jesse now understands he will



never be dead—this, though in some ways that idea is like to begin with it was there already somebody who comes along to support it. I had arguments with Rod about how, Jesse was in the original episode I thought the story was all about the old gentleman and the young gentleman. As the older man gets older, he begins losing his powers whereas the younger man starts gaining his. At a certain point, he will overcome the older guy, but I felt it would be interesting if age and wisdom occasionally beat out enthusiasm and talent.

What inspired the "Working in the Dark" episode?

I stole the idea from Ray Bradbury's "Death and the Maiden" (which concerns a 60-year-old woman's encounter with a handsome young man who is Death). When I read that story, I thought, "That's the universal truth! Death is not this machine, slimy thing. No, death is patient and considerate and takes away a great many evils. I realized there was more than any way to look at death and put of the idea came Robert Redford as a godly, kindly personification of death in *1917*. *Capote* in the terrible old woman he's trying to kill out. I think "Working in the Dark" is a transcendental piece of work that will live long after I'm gone, simply because it tells you that questionable truth that we all instinctively know: death is not as feared as we believed to be. It's surely a part of the natural flow of things.

You continued exploring the theme of death for your next episode, "Kick the Can."

"Kick the Can" is my favorite *Twilight Zone* episode. It has a lot of human wisdom in it. What it's really about is the idea that we all realize strategies to keep us from dealing with the personal subject of our own death. Basically, what's important to us is that quality of life. How can we control it, remain immortal and deny death? It's what we all try to do. The elderly characters in the old tale have a lot of wisdom how they have a number of things, they can live for a while, but since you're not, he's going to do it. I said, "Please don't change anything!" Buck said, "Too bad." I got back and immediately went to the studio and read the new script. I thought it was fine but I read it and I couldn't do it. I was sitting up. Rod had added the idea of *Time Machine* (Winning) writing in a ghostly Limbo for the new kid on the block, Jesse (Jack Klavorn), to challenge him, whereas he implicitly appears to *Edith* to play a game of *Jeopardy!* eventually wins and becomes the big legend himself and is last seen writing at the table in Limbo for his next challenge.

What are your thoughts on Steven Spielberg's 1983 remake of "Kick the Can" for *Twilight Zone: The Movie*?

It's going to be carved with you—it's a piece of crap! George didn't like the movie, and he was called in to present a director. It's bottled up, almost every level. Steven made him have some comfort for the story, but he could not have done that so severely. I think everyone who was in it, I had very hard and it's got a couple of fantastic moments. But when the little girl takes her walking toy, that was quite beautiful, but the rest was atrocious. I wish Steven had done it.



Johnson in *The Zone* episode from his only episode "The Four of Us Are Dying." "A Game of Pool," "Working in the Dark," "Kick the Can," and more George Clayton Johnson with Robert Serling.

Did you pitch any stories to Serling that didn't get produced?

I'd written a story called "Six Changes," which concerned a man who gradually has his head cut off. Mercifully, he regrows the missing head only to become aware that it is also regrowing another man, and there is only room for one of them. Rod loved the piece. He thought it was good. The story is his spouse, *Exorcist* like. Two weeks later, Rod came back and said that Steven Spielberg would not like the story because it was too gruesome. He asked me if I'd say it back because he thought it should not be had up on his list. I agreed.

How would you assess the cultural legacy of *Twilight Zone*?

Back in 1959, everybody got prepared to admit that the word had gone mad. Everything was justified and there was an anxiety to be afraid everywhere. People recognized the show and it was a part of the lives of people of public thought. As a result, some came *Jeopardy!*, *1950*, *The Beatles*, *The Stones*, brightly colored clothing and *The Twilight Zone*. All these things were about the extension of the mind and imagination. A series of episodes that we now call "The 1950s." The *Twilight Zone* was a vital component of cultural and imagination. It was being written for people who were watching the state of the world and confronting it on its own terms. I wish the episodes of the show and the *Twilight Zone* for a further part, making a lot of right things. I'm proud to be part of something that helped change our way of thinking. That's a grand thing.



# CINEMACABRE

FILM • DVD • REISSUES



## CREEPY BRAWLERS

### MONSTER BRAWL

Starring Dave Foley, Ari'el Reiche, and Robert Maillet  
Written and directed by Jesse T. Cosk  
Anchor Bay

Confession: I'm an old-school wrestling fan. Like a lot of guys my age, I spent my preteen Saturday afternoons watching Jake "The Snake" Roberts pull steel pranks on Randy "Macho Man" Savage while Papa Shango and The Undertaker engaged up supernatural hijinks in the squared circle. But that doesn't mean I ever thought it'd be wise to combine the format with my other childhood love: monster movies. Despite the idiosyncratic premise, Canadian director Jesse T. Cosk's *Monster Brawl* is as good as one could expect a campy, very violent flick designed for the midnight movie crowd.

The event set up eight classic monsters—Mummy, Werewolf, Frankenstein, Cyclops, Witch Blitch, Lady Vampire, Zombie Man and Swamp Out (more or less the Swamp Thing)—will battle to the death in a guy-per-view tournament inside of a

cryptology. The creatures are introduced UFC-style with their various strengths and weaknesses highlighted (the Mummy has chronic arthritis, for instance). Ringside commentary is provided by comedian Dave Foley (TV's *Kids in the Hall*) and veteran Canadian actor Ari'el Reiche (Black Christmas) while WWF legend Jimmy "Mouth of the South" Hart struts into a megaphone between bouts. During the breaks in "unscripted" action, mail order stores explaining how each monster came to be included in the tournament are as close as *Monster Brawl* ever comes to a traditional plot.

Yes, the idea is ridiculous. The creature design, practical latex gore and makeup are fabulous, however, and the actual fights are pretty brutal. In the opening match, Cyclops repeatedly smashes Witch Blitch in the face with a sledgehammer before melting her warty mug off with a laser beam from his eye! The

horror, none other than Lance Henriksen, also provides humorous *Monty Python*-style commentary after each monster is "finished."

*Monster Brawl* is still limited by its low-end concept, though. So take this for what it is: cheap,

dark entertainment. Get a few dudes together, knock back some beers, and you could do worse on a Monday night.

AARON VON LUTPION

## BLEEDING EXTRAS

### TRUE BLOOD: THE COMPLETE FOURTH SEASON

Starring Anna Paquin, Alexander Skarsgård  
and Sam Trammell  
Directed by Michael Lehmann, Scott Winant, et al.  
Written by Alexander Woo, Brian Koppelman, Alan Ball, et al.  
HBO

The fourth season of *True Blood* was an epic misstep. It betrayed Charlaine Harris' dark and sexy novel *Dead to the Stars* with too many supernatural beings, item-listed changes to the series' literary roots (kill as king, Reality?) and half-baked narratives dreamt up only to give secondary cast members something to do (see Anne's haunted baby). That said, at least HBO knows how to load up a box set.

The season—in which Eric is robbed of his memory by witches and Sookie's brother Jason is kidnapped for breeding stock by the neighboring vampire/human community—is once again presented in "Enhanced Viewing" on Blu-ray, meaning you can re-watch it while binge and FYI about *True Blood*'s myth-arc pop up at the bottom of the screen. There are also embedded in-character monologues from a whopping fourteen cast members, and the ability to view critical scenes



from other episodes/seasons without losing your place in the current one. In the previous box, many of the Enhanced Viewing add-ons left rather basic, but not this time. Seems HBO took the criticisms to heart and went back to adding more story to the story (Want to know how chrome fuck-up Jason became a cop? Actor Ryan Kwanten tells you in a bonus clip in episode one).

Each episode also boasts a five-minute "Inside the Episodes" featurette — an on-camera interview with the episode's writer, who discusses the plot elements in relation to what's come before. While it's interesting to get inside the creators' heads, much of what's said can be picked up from watching the show. But entrapal fans can go one deeper with the box set's six commentaries, from the primary cast, Ken Ball and selected crew.

It isn't all not great, though; there's "True Blood Lines," a how chart-style feature that maps out the characters' interconnections, and "True Blood: The Final Touches," a round-table discussion with the show's special effects team, editors, music supervisor, and composer Nathan Farn about the post-production process — from how the season's various effects were achieved to how sound design was approached.

As cool as all these extras are, however, they don't make up for the finale that was season four. Still, if you're an impatient bingeviewer, there's everything you need here to become a *True Blood* expert.

MONICA S. KUEHLER

## LAND OF CONFUSION

### THE FIELDS

Starring Tara-Finn, Clotie Leachman and Erika Anthony  
Directed by Tom Muller and David Mowbray  
Written by Harrison Smith  
Breaking Glass

The prominence of weathered-up actress Tara-Finn and Academy Award winner Clotie Leachman (*The Last Picture Show*) as the top-billed names on *The Fields* may cause you to raise an eyebrow. Prone to be seemingly perplexed after watching this one-writer, it occasionally stumbles, into orbit.

Thankfully, Finn's role in the film is very minor. She plays a young woman (in a bedwig) who has a history of being abused. After a particularly abusive night in which her husband holds a gun to her head, she decides to leave her son in the care of her parents (Leachman and Erika Anthony), on their farm. The movie then struggles to follow any specific storyline, but swings back to the boy and how afraid he is of the cannibals — where he continues to wander, despite



*True Blood: The Complete Fourth Season* Picked up with all the guy details

warnings than his grandparents. It eventually becomes clear that someone or something is living among the rows, as the family experiences escalating disturbances at night.

Like a lot of indie movies, *The Fields* suffers from a lack of editing. There are various subplots going on, but they don't exactly tie together. The movie is set in 1973 and makes a point of constantly reminding the *Mission Family* murders, which happened four years earlier. And there's a hippie someone and door, but their presence is so sporadic that we're never led to believe that they could have anything to do with the disturbances. Other characters are randomly introduced — including an aunt who is a prostitute definitely — only to disappear without being reintroduced again. Much of the movie comes off as arbitrary until the final climax, which doesn't bring any great conclusions either.

There are worthwhile moments, though. Directors Tom Muller and David Mowbray occasionally construct some genuinely tense scenarios, and the "bad" scenes are surprisingly effective. The movie looks very digital but benefits from smooth and beautiful photography. And both Leachman and Appleton turn in natural performances, despite the scatter-shot script.

Still, it's hard to get caught up in a story that's so awkward. Better we all be good boys and girls and stay away from *The Fields*.

AARON VON LUPTON

## DEATH RIDES A HORSE... SOMETIMES

### EXIT HUMANITY

Starring Mark Gibson, Bill Moseley and Dee Wallace  
Written and directed by John Goddes  
Anchor Bay

"Written, directed and produced by" is a great thing — it means the person who conceived the story got to see that vision through. "Written, directed, produced and edited by" — uh-oh, did you just hear a movie scratch across a record? Few filmmakers — John Sayles and Robert Rodriguez among them — can effectively edit their own work, and John Goddes

is not an exception to the rule, unfortunately.

Taking all of the above mentioned credits on *Exit Humanity*, he delivers a zombie western on a tiny budget that looks great, has some effectively creepy sequences but at 112 minutes is at least twenty minutes too long.

Surprisingly intense newcomer Mark Gibson stars as Edward Young, who returns home from the Civil War to find his son missing and the rest of his family victims of a zombie plague. His quest to locate his errant offspring takes him through a ravaged countryside, where he joins forces with a fellow military man, mounts a mission to rescue a woman taken by rogue soldiers (led by a scenery-chewing Bill Moseley) who are conducting nearly medical experiments, and finds shelter with a healer, played by Dee Wallace in a very obvious wig.

For much of the movie, though, Edward rides — and then walks once the horse budget dries up — through the forest, making inner monologues meant to invoke a Terence Malick-type of man-in-nature poetry. Initially it's a fresh take on the zombie subgenre, but soon becomes tedious, as he drones on, plodding through the same, unchanging woods.

There's certainly much to admire about *Exit Humanity*, including the concept, the great cinematography, very cool production art courtesy of our own Justin Erickson's Phantom City Creative (just slide twenty bucks under my white door) and a compelling leading man. However, it's frustrating that Goddes didn't bring in a scriptfilm editor to tighten it up. The movie saved on a shorter shoot could have, for example, gone a long way to better zombie makeup and accord for the hero that actually looks like of the time period.

Plenty of promise in *Exit Humanity*, it's just a little short on horse-sense when it comes to pacing.

DAVE ALEXANDER

# ABBREVIATED SHORT FILMS REVIEWED TERRORS



## RANUNCULUS

30 minutes

[trifolioscapes.com](http://trifolioscapes.com)

Writer/director Richard Powell strolls through like noir territory before making a sharp turn into Cronenbergian body horror with this torrid, uncomfortable tale of a man who confabulates his inner monster. John Dodd is a middle-aged middle-class house phone to leave his family and themselves by his wife's unexpected pregnancy. He secretly drugs her in order to abort the real-

ized inside-bitch, only to decide that even more drastic measures are in order when Mrs. Dodd talks about trying again. Is John a sneaky, murderous bastard, or is he driven by some thing living inside of him? The answer's in the climax, when the pitch-black family drama turns into a gory tale of a man and his box cutter. Stick production values, gruesome practical effects, and disturbing narrative — Familiar really gets under your skin.

APRIL SMELLEN



## THE PEEPSHOW

13 minutes

[facebook.com/thepeepshow](http://facebook.com/thepeepshow)

Staged like a documentary that investigates a civilized settlement of zombies in a social setting, *The Peepshow* (as they like to be called, "hardcore") being so uncouth and all, supposes that zeds can do much more than just moan and groan, and puts them on camera to share the trials of what it is to be a zombie. It's a clever concept that makes a few good laughs, with the especially juicy makeup effects giving way to a couple of great sight gags (one particularly nice lump of skin dressed in a "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" T-shirt absolutely killed me) but even at just half-hour mark, writer/director Greg Lavender runs out of ideas, including a funny way to end his otherwise accomplished clip.

TREVOR TURNER



## ETHEREAL CRYSTALS

10 minutes

[etereal-crystals.com](http://etereal-crystals.com)

Sri Jayanta's *Ethereal Crystals* is an unrelenting DMT trip to the borders of the rational, knocking through a nightmare realm into the dark domain of the subconscious. It's a visceral experience that drags the viewer to the peak of the mountains of madness. Adding to the mind-bending visuals are Martin Gaultier's epic Gamma Ray-as-psycho score and some killer

makeup effects, including work by so-good-he's-a-godress Penny Goshute (SMW11A). Not a single word of dialogue is uttered, but a number of key references (from Lowenthal to Alviner/Crowley) surface, proving that Jayanta is also fascinated by those who've attempted to report their world beyond our own. A masterpiece of short-form psychedelic cinema.

TAL ESHMAN

## LOVE IS A DRUG

### NEVERLOST

Starring Ryan Barrett, Emily Alabala and Jennifer Polansky

Written and directed by David Ansdorff

Runtime: 84

*Neverlost* is the latest in a long string of surreal, waking nightmare kind of movies to mine the same fractured mental territory as *The Machinist* or *The Jacket*. While it's been done before, there's certainly room for improvement in the creepy brain-splinter subgenre.

*Neverlost* concerns smugly twentysomething Josh Higgins (Ryan Barrett), who, still reeling from the tragic death of his true love years earlier, is suffering through a prolonged bout of insomnia. His quickie marriage to overly crazy Meg (Jennifer Polansky) is on the rocks; their apartment is a neglected dive and he's badly in need of psychiatric care. His doctor prescribes him some goodnight meds, but when he does finally drift off, he finds himself in an alternate idyllic life where he's still with his old flame — the beautifully sun-kissed Kate (Emily Alabala) — as if she'd never perished in the house fire that Josh alleges was set by her dead-beat dad.

When he wakes, though, it's back to his miserable co-habitation with Meg, leaving him longing to gobble more pills. As Josh oscillates between the parallel universes, it's increasingly unclear which one is his reality. Eventually the pills run out and he's left with the crushing pain of life with Meg, leading him to rob a pharmacy and become embroiled in a bloody altercation amidst a desperate attempt to stay on the Kate side of his splintered brain.

There's nothing groundbreaking about *Neverlost*, but if you're going to follow what's come previously, there are easier routes to take than trying to orchestrate a fault, hallucinogenic puzzle. Writer/director David Ansdorff does a fine job with both his tight script and creative direction, and only betrays the film's title in the final act when the performances dim slightly and some of the dream logic gets muddy. Though this is undoubtedly a low-budget Canadian production, it never looks it, and Barrett is consistently watchable as he unravels in a medicated haze.

TREVOR TURNER

## SINKING FEELING

### SECTOR 7

Starring Ji-won Ha, Song-Kee Ahn and Ji-ho Oh

Directed by Ji-han Kim

Written by Ji-yeon Yoo

Runtime: 88

It's no fun watching a giant monster movie when the monster sucks. But it's a double dagger when you're watching a giant monster movie with a sacky monster, zero suspense, poorly developed characters and a script that an eight-year-old could write. Such is the case with Korean effort *Sector 7*.

Opening in 1965, a deep-sea expedition uncovers several fluorescent swirly things — realized in poorly rendered CGI — which lead to the unearthing of a larger, unseen force. Fast-forward to the present and we are introduced to the cast as they frantically try to stop a leak that has sprung on an old rig platform. Each one is careensome over-the-top, with the most notable of the bunch being Ji-won Ha, who is quickly established as a Ripley-like action heroine, though she hardly possesses Rippearmy Wearer's physical presence or acting chops.

As human bodies start turning up on the rig, a monster is suspected to be of large enough the crew, but we all know it's not a monster. Instead, the movie's halfway mark and looks like something from an Xbox game. To be fair, it's one





of the better effects Sector 7 has to offer. The rest of the CGI, such as the entire oil rig, is so obviously digital that you'll experience painful flashbacks to the virtual reality scene in *Jacob &*.

Even the story is an unapologetically unoriginal mish-up of every action-horror cliché: the female lead with a haunted past, the goofy males who are expendable monster fodder, and the big twist that the monster's existence is a result of man's greed. One can only assume that this waterlogged piece of monster dung, which allegedly had a budget of \$10 million (!), is a really late attempt to cash in on the success of 2000's *The Host*. If it's a similarly grand-scale Korean monster movie you seek, don't bother exploring *Sector 7*. This deep sea adventure is as shallow as they come.

ARJON VON LIFTON

## WORLD WIDE WEB

### CAMEL SPIDERS

Starring Ron Krause, C. Thomas Howell and Melissa Brusselle  
Directed by Jim Wynorski (produced as Jay Andrews)  
Written by Jim Wynorski and J. Bruce White  
Anchor Bay

Parrotfish, chicken hawk, rat snake, tiger shark, harpy, coon dog, real, Sharktopus, piranha-people, dinosaurs, dinosaur, crossbreeds, fictitious. Camel spider? WTF? Also, they do indeed exist. They're indigenous to the deserts of Afghanistan and have caused some minor trouble for troops over there. They're big, ugly and venomous, though not lethal. And that's where any ties between scientific fact and this film get permanently severed. Normally, that wouldn't matter much—except that the film kinda sucks.

After an opening sequence in which a fight between Taliban buddies and American forces is rudely interrupted by a massive attack of spiders, the body of a fallen soldier is transported back to the Southwestern US (which looks so much like the previous scene as "Afghanistan," you'd almost think... no, never mind). Naturally, a couple of the officers have stayed away in the cockpit and are spawning offspring of a rate that would put most leggie themselves to shame.

Catastrophic infiltration of a remote desert town ensues, and it's up to Ron Krause as the brave counter-attacking officer, Melissa Brusselle as the hot sergeant and C. Thomas Howell as the savvy local sheriff, to rely the hapless locals into action.

The spiders get bigger, uglier and more venomous, and there's a lot of shooting and running around and diving for cover. We get the now-obligatory Siege Movie Act Break Confessional, in which the second and third acts are linked by a scene where various characters reveal deeply personal secrets to each other while the enemy has momentarily retreated. You know, nothing was ever good enough for my letter my heart is still broken over a high school romance, I'm gay, etc. Just in case they get killed and never have a chance to confess.

Only a certified fool would expect convincing creature effects to such a movie but it's beyond the pale when an entire wracked-injury appears to be walking four inches above the ground. Honestly, it's like the keyboard/jackies were practicing work-to-rule in the FX department.

JOHN W. BOWEN



## OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE FINDS SOME FATAL FRAMES

### DEAD QUIET ON SET

#### FRIGHT FLICK

Wicked Circle

The film industry has often been referred to as cutthroat, and *Fright Flick* is proof. The movie follows a production crew hired up in a hotel making a sequel to a film whose leading lady was murdered a few years prior. The director is a pompous ass, the producer a jerk and the crew is either plotting to make their own film or busy looking each other over to get ahead in the business. So when some of 'em turn up with crawlers rammed through their hearts or hedge clippers shoved in their eye sockets, everybody suspects everybody else. Very low-budget, *Fright Flick* still manages a poised look and has enough asked-bombs, buckets of blood and cheesy gray-filmed humor to make John Wilson envious.

BODY COUNT: 15

BEST FILM-RELATED FATALITY: Head perforated with a camera tripod

### SAY CHEESE

#### SMILE

aOne

It's weird how you need a license to drive, get married or own a pet, but anyone can make a film. A couple of years ago, even I started to make a zombie flick before my buddies and I ran out of money and enthusiasm. What I'm saying is that some films shouldn't have been made, and this is one of them. It begins promisingly enough, with Armand Assante working as a haggard crime-scene photographer in Morocco, but then inexplicably shifts gears to follow a group of hipster d-bags who find a camera that takes pictures foreshadowing how each of them will die. The death scenes are lame, the acting is horrible and the premise is laughable that your town will only turn upside-down once it's over.

BODY COUNT: 12

BEST FILM-RELATED FATALITY: Punctured by antlers, as predicted by a Polaroid

### CINEMA SCARE-IT

#### LIGHTS, CAMERA, DEAD

Aesthetix Productions

What do you do when nobody else sees your low-budget, independent horror movie as the masterpiece you think it is, and the cast and crew are the wrong to walk? Kill 'em and keep the cameras rolling, of course! That's the idea behind this fun little film-within-a-film about a pair of struggling directors whose production is brought to a halt due to their complete incompetence. But after accidentally killing a crew member, they find the missing element they need: actual death scenes. Though the first half of *Lights Camera Dead*'s more humorous than horrific—especially the hilarious casting scene—the second half ramps up the gore and makes for a tight, witty romp that'll have you thinking twice about volunteering to work on your friend's zombie movie.

BODY COUNT: 8

BEST FILM-RELATED FATALITY: Barbed with a dismembered

LAST CHANCE LANCE



## REISSUES



## DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY

GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH (1990) *Blu-ray*

Starring Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates and Christopher Lee  
Directed by Joe Dante  
Written by Charles S. Ross and Chris Columbus  
Warner Bros.

Joe Dante has always approached his work with his tongue jammed firmly in cheek. The man behind genre classics such as *The Howling* is known for delivering the gooey horror goods by way of a healthy dose of irony and in-jokes, ensuring nothing is taken too seriously. So, if this self-mockery is Dante's worst-kept movie secret, *Gremlins 2* might be his definitive film.

With a studio as desperate for a sequel that the director was given complete control, his 1990 follow-up is a gloriously sick cartoon that toys with monster ramps, the original *Gremlins*' sequel, '80s materialism and movies in general. The movie approach failed at the box office, since not all audiences got the plastic fun established in the pseudo-Spielbergian original, but it also guaranteed the film cult classic status.

The wittily idiotic plot is merely an excuse to skew the lovely Guffy monsters free at a Manhattan skyscraper that serves as a TV studio/festival hotspot.

After Guffy's owner dies (remember, he was returned to the old man in the cure shop at the end of the first film), the creature ends up in the hands of a corporation that's experimenting on him. It just happens that the shop's former owner Billy (Zach Galligan) and his fiancée Katie (Phoebe Cates) have moved to the big city and work at the company. Soon enough, Guffy gets wet, spawns more critters, they eat and turn gremlin, and chaos ensues with a mad scientist (evil Dante) stocks the movie with mutated gremlins spiced with bats, spiders, electricity, gives them super-intelligence and even lady girls, and mimes in great supporting roles for genre slavers such as



Dick Miller and Christopher Lee. And with Rick Baker handling the effects, the film boasts remarkable rubber monster puppetry and gory details that would never make it in contemporary Hollywood (the paper shredder that slings green innards is a particular highlight).

Some of the colorist's shots (apparently Superman B-roll) look a bit dodgy on Warner Bros' new Blu-ray, but the studio scenes practically bounce off the screen with Dante's cartoonish color scheme benefiting from the high-def upgrade. Unfortunately, the informative and appropriately goofy special features are all DVD leftovers.

While it's sad that Dante has been fairly quiet since

the '90s (his 2009 indie 3-D kiddie horror *The Hole in the Wall* isn't released in North America), at least his legacy was allowed to run again too (the only difference being the lack of a digital copy in the new set).

PHIL BROWN

## SKITTER SKITTER...

MIMIC: 3 FILM SET (1997 - 2003) *Blu-ray*

Starring Rhianna, Alan Ruckman and Lancelotti Ruckman  
Directed by Guillermo del Toro, Juan de Segovia  
and J.T. Petty  
Written by Matthew Robbins, Joel Sokolov, J.T. Petty et al  
Lionsgate

Goddamn cockroaches. The gigantic, killer mutant ones in the movie, too, sure, but I'm talking about the double-dipping ones at Lionsgate who put out the excellent *Mimic: Director's Cut* (MIMIC) last September and are now re-releasing it with gaudy love and three. So, if you want the sequel on Blu-ray, you gotta get the original to run again too (the only difference being the lack of a digital copy in the new set).

If you didn't already get the new-Godzilla del Toro-approved version of his cinematic only career from the Land of Bob and Harvey Weinstein, then this is even more of a reason to snag a great bug movie. Re-release it stars Mira Sorvino as an entomologist who discovers that a strain of cockroach (the *Judas Breed*), introduced several years earlier to kill off regular cockroaches carrying the deadly "Shinkler's Disease," has survived and mutated into human-sized bugs with the ability to crudely mimic human features, allowing them to lurk around in the shadows of Manhattan and prey on people in the hands of del Toro, the concept is much less gaudy than it sounds, and the director's cut comes closer to what he'd envisioned before studio workers ruined it. The extras, carved over here, are great at debasing the rescued cut.



Juan de Segovia's *Mimic 2*, however, suffers from a lukewarm script, boring direction and a not-quite-credible lead in the form of Alan Ruckman, who was second fiddle in the first film. Here, her teacher character is the object of one of the bug's affections. As if kills off those near her, she must protect a couple students at her school, while a speculative government agency tries to gas the whole place. Aside from a few disturbing and disgusting critter encounters, this one's a snooze.

Wings get much more interesting in *Mimic 3: Sentinel*, thanks to writer-director J.T. Petty (S.M.M., *The Remains*), who basically remakes *Rear Window* with bugs. Shot in Eastern Europe on a ridiculously low budget, it stars Karl Geary (*The Burrowing*) as a sickly survivor of the cockroach plague who spends most of his time in his room taking pictures at the apartment across the way. Told by his sex and an attractive neighbor, he discovers that people are being dragged off by mysterious figures. Eventually an hero uncovers some dirty deeds involving the

renowned entomologist (Junee Henkerson) living across the street, who has angered the Jades' friend and brought their rocky wrath down on the 'beet' it's shot on bug action and the OGI can't do, but the *Rear Window* movie is gripping. Add a commentary by Petty, and *Sinister* is worth the extra bucks.

Now someone at *Lansdale* turn on the lights and send these marketing guys scuttling.

DORIE ALEXANDER

## SNOWY HELL

### GHOSTKEEPER (1981) <sup>PG</sup>

Starring: Riva Spier, Murray Gell and Shari McFadden  
Directed by Jim McKeachuk  
Written by Jim McKeachuk and Doug MacLeod  
Cable: Red

Canada films often display a talent for showcasing the country's bleakest winter and seasonal scenes landscapes. Whether it's dense wilderness filled with snow-covered trees or long, barren stretches of blinding white, our inhospitable weather and cold, snowy terrain has been put to good use in such homegrown horror pics as *Caroline's Girls* (1973), *Decayed* (1974) and an obscure, *Albino*-shot wedge flick from 1981 called *Ghostkeeper*.

Working in the Rockies, Jenny (Riva Spier), boyfriend Marty (Murray Gell) and Chissy (Shari McFadden) are out for a day of snowmobiling when an accident and blizzard prompts them to seek refuge at a nearby lodge. Though seemingly abandoned, the creepy building turns out to be inhabited by a strange old woman (George Collins) and her son. The apparent caretaker of the hotel, the woman graciously allows the trio to stay the night. However, the less gifts more than they bargained for when one of them is attacked, taken down to the cellar and then carried off by a deformed man. Add in a tempered-but-scareless, one of the travellers looking sanity, plus a Final Girl and you've got yourself a snowy chiller hybrid.

Produced during Canada's "tax shelter" boom of the late '70s/early '80s, *Ghostkeeper* departs from straight-up slashers at the time in that it attempts to dispense with many of the key subgenre elements — such as teenage victims and a masked killer — in



*The Wizard of Gore*  
Waiting precision death magic.

favor of a more supernatural storyline involving a flesh-eating wedge. The scoreable creepy score by prolific composer Paul Zuck. *Phen Night*, *Huggy Buggy* to the MMs, *Caroline's* side much to the proceedings, as does John Holbrook's rebar cinematography that said, *Ghostkeeper* moves at a pace a snail's pace at times, and the design of the wedge leaves much to be desired.

The widescreen DVD (available only through Code Red's blog, for some reason) sports an impressively clear picture and is a treat to anyone who has seen the dark VHS version. Extras include interviews with Collins and Holbrook, a commentary with director Jim McKeachuk and actors Spier and Gell. *Phen Night* fans of atmospheric, wedge *Caroline's* may just want to make *Ghostkeeper* a keepsake.

JAMES BURNELL

## BLOOD RED 'RAY'

### THE WIZARD OF GORE (1970) THE GORE GIRLS (1972) <sup>PG-13</sup>

Starring: Ray Spier, Judy Gell and Frank Morris  
Directed by Herschel Gordon Lewis  
Written by Allen Kahn and Alan J. Decker  
Something Weird

H.G. Lewis' final two horror films before his return to the limy pit as a 30-year absence with 2002's *Blood Feast 2: A V.I. Car Enclave* have now been given the double-feature Blu-ray treatment, and the results are, as always, as it worth picking up yet another version? Well, that depends.

These two pioneering gas films are important to horror history, as they pushed the sanguine-soaked envelope far beyond anything else of the era, including *Leviathan* (1963) and *Two Thousand* (1964).

*The Wizard of Gore* is garbed around Montag the Magnificent, a magician who performs gory shows that lead to the brutal deaths of his students, and the young couple who take it upon themselves to stop the homicidal illusionist.

Amper the gas up a notch further is *Gore Gore Girls*, which follows private dick Abraham Gentry on his quest to apprehend a mysterious killer who's been brutalizing local women.

Something Weird Video previously gave these films their own much-deserved DVD Special Editions, complete with audio commentary featuring Lewis and SAW trader Mike Winans and bonus galeries of exploitation ads for Lewis' many films. Both of these elements make a return on the new Blu-ray, along with a glut of trailers and improved picture quality, which, perhaps due to the condition of the source prints, is only a nominal upgrade from the DVD releases. The mono audio mix is pretty much the same, and a clip from *Love Goddesses of Gore* (which was included on the original *Gore Gore Girls* DVD) is missing, though it was really only a strange hook as it's not a tragic oversight.

If you don't already own these classic gas films, you're gonna want to scoop up this *Blood-Orchard Double Feature*. However, without much new in the way of extras and only a slight improvement to the visuals, a double-dip may not be as delicious as it seems.

PATRICK DOLAN



# THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

Deliver Us From Evil

by Paul Conroy

**O**F ALL THE HORROR TRENDS THAT weaved in and out of the 1960s — the gory fever dreams of H.B. Lewis, Roger Corman's psychedelic Poe adaptations, the low-budget Psycho knock-offs — one of the most enduring has been the so-called "Garden of Eden" flick. Starring faded screen queens such as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, these hyper-erotic horror films were emotional steam-cookers that specialized in hysterical acting, cutting dialogue and decaying decadence. Newly re-released as part of Sony's 1000 DVD slate, *Devil! Devil! My Darling!* (1965) is one entry that owes much to earlier subgenre classics. *Witcher Happened to Ruby Jane?* (1962) and *Flash, Seward Charlotte!* (1964), but also manages to transcend the southern gothic trappings of its predecessors.

Just as the earlier movies provided vehicles for Davis and Crawford, *Devil! Devil! My Darling!* showcases Tabulah Bankhead taking big bites out of the scenery as a mean-spirited spinster — what was to be her final big-screen appearance. But more than just giving viewers the chance to see the former 1930s glamour queen vamp it up in a decidedly unglamorous role, the film also pageantly explores religious fervor taken to uncomfortable extremes. While horror filmmakers at the time were usually comfortable pulling back the curtain to feature the evil handwork of devil worshippers and other macabre cults, it was virtually unheard of to depict Christianity itself as a potential source for malevolence. The film, based on Richard Matheson's screenplay adaptation of Anne Rice-dell's novel, is incredibly ahead of its time — only recently has this theme been seen again in films such as *Martyrs* (2003) and Kevin Smith's *Red State* (2010).

Released when Winifred Bayliff Church founder Fred Phelps was just a fresh-faced law school grad, the film showcases a makeup-free Bankhead as Mrs. Terkole, a strict and stern bible-thumper whose devotion to the literal word of the Good Book and refusal to quit over her son's death spills over into violence. Living alone in her English countryside manor with a few devoted servants (including *Shower Dogs!* Peter Wagner, and Donald



Sutherland as a male gardener). Mrs. Terkole receives a visit from Pat (Gloria Powell), the one-time fiancée of her son who died in an automobile accident several years earlier. Pat's looking for some closure, but she finds no comfort from Mrs. Terkole, who chastises the young woman for wearing cosmetics ("Go upstairs and remove that filth at once!"), showing up late to her lengthy pre-dinner mealtime and asking for salt to spice up bland vegetarian meals prepared in compliance with Biblical rules. The strained relations between the two women finally snap when Mrs. Terkole learns that Pat plans to marry another man; she demands Pat renounce the previous engagement until she is reunited with her son in heaven. At first, she looks up the works in an attempt to cast out her wicked ways, but after Pat's expected escape attempts, Mrs. Terkole decides to hasten their beyond-the-graves wedding any way she can.

While most of the Garden of Eden Giallo films presented their aging actresses as emotionally fragile victims or out-of-control killers, Bankhead's stubborn, bullying zealot is a rare twist on the usual formula. With her awe-inspiring, stately voice, hand

expressions and haunted moral superiority, Bankhead is in excellent form while unleashing a campaign of self-righteous sermonizing as the film hurtles towards the true secret of Pat's dead fiancé. A former actress whose deceased husband cared for her disheveled lifestyle, Mrs. Terkole's preservation of her dead son's purity is a direct reaction to her own past and continued secret weaknesses, as revealed in one particularly poignant moment when she has a complete emotional breakdown and heads to her closet to guiltily indulge in a hidden stash of lipstick makeup and the simple vanity of a small hand mirror — the only one in the house.

In a world that seems increasingly polarized — especially if internet discourse can be trusted — *Devil! Devil! My Darling!* (which was also introduced by the Maitis! 1994 song of the same name) is one of the few classic horror films that's more relevant now than ever before. Though far from a masterpiece, it's essential in its attempts to draw out the horrific possibilities of organized religion as more modern takes on the subject. And yet *Devil! Devil! My Darling!* isn't a direct attack on Christianity or religion, but rather a story warning about the effect that an oppressively dogmatic approach to spirituality could have on a mentally unbalanced individual and, perhaps most especially, an almost-forgotten Hollywood ingenue.



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# CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

*Humanoid From the Shallow End*  
by John W. Bowen

Even if your scalp has never been plagued with itchy, dry flakes before, I'd recommend using a dandruff shampoo for at least a few days prior to viewing the recently unearthed 1971 fringe furore *Zaat*, as it may result in an unprecedented amount of head-scratching.

Usually even the longest-bud title will eventually ring a bell with at least one Rue Morgue staffer, but nobody — not the editors, publishers, art director, interns, creepy janitor who's currently the subject of a restraining order issued by said interns, nor even I, your thesaurus-delete-bin-miscoder — had ever heard of *Zaat* prior to Galtro's impressive new DVD/Ga-may combo pack release. But experience has taught me that when the bots scream it at home and then attaches a Post-it to my review copy with the inscription, "If you have any of that El Paso Electric Beagle-to-Winechick Gold left, now might be the appropriate time," it's a sign that some lo-fi cinematic mind-sodder is about to arrive.

The only dialogue during the first twenty minutes of this film is a rambling, stonerlike voice-over from Dr. Karl Leopold (Marshall Crenshaw), a marine biologist whom we later learn may also be a Nazi war criminal, "cause hey, that's always good for additional war in and. Voice-over is often abused as a cheap trick to afford exposition, but in this case, very little of narrative info gets imparted to us. Instead, we're bombarded with aquarium porn — stock footage of everything from scorpion fish to big, gnarly-looking crustaceans to sharks — while the mad, mad doc spouts gems such as "Gangsters' fish, mighty bearer of the deep! What an inspiration you have been! My friend, the shark. Gunning Swift! Whiskered humans are afraid of you. Soon, I'll swim with you. They'll be afraid! Heheheh!"



Eventually we learn that Laughing Boy has developed a serum to turn himself into *Zaat*, a really stupid-looking humanoid/fish hybrid, with a view to taking over the world and wreaking vengeance on former colleagues who ridiculed him. But how

exactly this will lead to world domination is never really made specific (John Cassavetes once famously remarked, "Continuity is for pussies." Apparently the writers of *Zaat* felt the same way about motivation.) Or, maybe, once the transformation is complete, the disorienting viewer can't help but notice that he doesn't resemble a catfish so much as a long-faced green orifier that wouldn't have made

the cut in *The Horror of Party Beach*, but at least he acknowledges this aesthetic failure himself after a glance in the mirror.

Leopold/*Zaat* wastes no time hunting down his warlike rival at whose convenience live in the same pleasant bog, to keep track, he takes some magic marker and crosses out a photo of each victim on a big circular agenda to become a day planner

though he keeps on the wall in his lab. We never get a very clear look at its contents, but it's akin to "Tuesday: settle score with old rival! Wednesday: pick up dry cleaning! Thursday: order cake for Mom's birthday, kill other old rival!" Oh, and he also needs to breed with women, but not before transforming them into the *Zaats* first, and since I'm loathe to drink out spikers, let's just say this part of the plan doesn't go too smoothly. As the bodies pile up, the World's Most Cliche Redneck Sheriff (Paul Galloway) and Rex the marine biologist (David Cross, officially credited as Marine Biologist Rex) get down to sleuthin' and snooglin' up a storm but always seem to be several steps behind, not least of which because the Sheriff is also chasing a roving group of tank singer hippies (with state sales — blech).

Whether this Jacksonville, Florida-shot cheese will ever take its rightful place in the pantheon of tropical creature features we acknowledge seems is hard to say, but this surprisingly good-looking monster package has much to recommend it, including commentary and extensive liner notes. Now get the hell out of my basement... unless, of course, you happen to be picking a bit more of that El Paso Electric Beagle, in which case, (sigh) "Oh, won't you stay-away just a little bit longer?"





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and Renzo Padesta  
Viper Comics

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DC

**TEX THORN KILLER #1**  
Rob Anderson  
and Duke Ye  
Big Dog Ink

**14 SCARS #1 OF 4**  
Mark Rahoff  
and Karl Jones  
Image

**WIND THE GAP #1**  
Joe McCann, Austin English  
and Steve Steck  
Image

**SAGA #1**  
Brian K. Vaughan  
and Fiona Staples  
Image

# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PEDRO CABEZUELO

I've been somewhat hesitant to speak about digital comics in the column, primarily because I will always prefer the printed page to a backlit screen. However, there's no denying the digital bit the drum brings many advantages to the comics genre.

Viper Comics is a relatively new player in the field, having been established in 2003. In that time, however, the company has garnered attention for critically acclaimed series such as *Dead@17*, about a resurrected girl who fights demons, and the steampunk western *Daisy Miller*. While still maintaining a number of print series, Viper is making inroads in the digital market, an area the company believes is rife with potential to reach a much wider audience.

In spring 2012, Viper premiered its first fully digital title, *Ichabod Jones: Monster Hunter*, a four-issue series by Russell Nohely and Renzo Padesta. Released through online digital services such as Graphity and Muse at the rate of one issue per month, the digital medium seems appropriate for a story that deals heavily with visual perception.

The title character is a deranged, mental patient who believes his maximum security asylum is being overrun by a horde of monsters. Fancying himself something of a hero, he decides to save the world from what he believes is merely the prelude to the coming apocalypse. But first, he needs to escape the facility.

Nohely's favourite horror films include such mind-benders as *Lost Highway*, *In the Mouth of Madness* and *Jacob's Ladder* (he describes them as "ones where you get to the end and ask, 'What the heck did I just watch?'"). It's not surprising, therefore, that *Ichabod Jones* plays fast and loose with the reader's perception. Are we really seeing what is being presented or is it all part of a mental patient's seamy delusion?

"It might be the most unreliable viewpoint one could ever have," teases Nohely. "Everything from

the art style to the story is intended to bring you into Ichabod's messed-up perception of reality. The main question I want people to ask is whether this whole story is actual reality, a dream Ichabod is having, or is he actually killing innocent people and he just thinks it's the apocalypse? I have a fascination with seeing things from every perspective, and this is the realization of that in a big way."

Of course, helping Nohely achieve this vision is the brilliant artwork of Padesta, who manages to make everything look distorted yet perfectly ordered at the same time.

"When I started looking for an artist, I knew exactly what I wanted," says Nohely. "I also knew it would be next to impossible to find the right artist. I fully planned to have the script sitting on my shelf for years... [But] the minute Renzo sent me a test page, I knew he was the [one]. If you look at Renzo's website ([renzopadesta.blogspot.ca](http://renzopadesta.blogspot.ca)), you'll see he has a very warped style—and

it's not just a style suited for horror. His book *27* isn't a horror book but it still has that warped sense of style that makes Renzo unique. I've never seen another artist quite like him, or a book quite like *Ichabod*. So they're a great fit."

Since the artwork played such a fundamental part in the narrative, did the material have to be approached differently, given that this would be a digital story?

"The fact that it was going to be digital was very important to the storytelling in one major way," says Nohely. "I couldn't do two-page spreads—two-page spreads look terrible when you read them online since you have to rotate and manip-



*Ichabod Jones: Monster Hunter*, Viper Comics' first fully digital title

ulate the computer in order to make it look right. You have to do one-page spreads only and make it look big and bold. That was the biggest difference. Otherwise, it was the same as any other comic."

Ultimately, Nohely hopes readers are drawn into the story, regardless of the medium, and the potential inherent in the horror genre. "I think the appeal within the horror genre is that people who watch or read horror want to push the boundaries of their minds. Much like science fiction, I think people's minds are more open with horror than most other genres, which in turn allows creators to push the boundaries of reality."

*Ichabod Jones: Monster Hunter* is available online now at [vipercomics.com](http://vipercomics.com). And, in keeping with the digital theme of this column, you can now follow me on Twitter @PCabazuelo.





In 1980, DC released *I... Vampire!*, inspired, its answer to Marvel's popular *Dracula* series. The serialized adventure ran as a back-up feature in *House of Mystery*. Unlike *Dracula*, however, the strip's undead star, the baronetist Andrew Gonsell, has spent the last 400 years of his life chasing after his ex-lover, Mary, Queen of Blood, an evil vampire whose unholy order, the Blood Red Moth, has infiltrated many levels of human society. The entire four year-run of the series is collected in this one attractive edition. *I... Vampire!* has aged surprisingly well, with many of its ideas predicting numerous current trends in vampire fiction. A great chance to revisit a series you probably missed the first time.

**Proving there are** still new ways to tell a zombie story, along comes this great comic told from the point of view of a handful of dogs, a cat and a baseball-bat-wielding gorilla. In *Rex*, Zowie Kiefer, the small pack of furry friends must successfully chart a course through a zombie wasteland, avoiding not only the rotters but also human survivors with less than noble intentions. Giff's fun and close art works well with a fairly straightforward



story that nevertheless manages to be fun, suspenseful and genuinely moving. Yes, the gorilla is cool, but any comic that brings a tear to this cynical reviewer's eye is a genuine winner.

**The story of zombies** in Vietnam continues with *War Stories*' second storyline, which widens the

net somewhat by moving out of the jungle and giving us a peek at what's going on elsewhere in the world. Parts of the series shouldn't last, however. The bulk of the story still takes place in Vietnam, with our gang of soldiers having to face down zombies as well as the Viet Cong. The comic moves along at a good pace with plenty of characterization — though perhaps a few too many char-



acters — and lots of gore, grotesquely rendered by Neil Jones. There's also a palpable feeling of exhaustion from many of the troops, which helps add to the book's already tense and heavy atmosphere.

**Young Ellis Petersen** falls victim to what appears to be a sinister snugging, which leaves her comatose. While her body is surrounded by friends



and her estranged family, her consciousness floats in a regularized otherworld. Able to see and hear what's happening on the physical plane, Ellis tries to piece together what led to the attack, aided by the mysterious Bobby, who acts as an informal guide to the

spirit world. There's a tremendous amount of story taking place in this first issue of *Mind*, the Guy, but to the creators' credit, nothing feels forced or overwhelming. Each page reveals another layer to what looks to be a very dense and creepy mystery with plenty of twists, suggesting early on that nothing is quite what it appears to be. A bold and confident beginning to what looks to be a unique series.

**It's taken me** some time to get hold of this premiere issue of *Saga*, which quickly sold out of its first three printings. Reason being, it's absolutely brilliant! The story is simple enough: two planets are at war. The planet filled primarily with winged beings that harbor

a technology fetish is eternally at odds with the beings of one of its moons, whose horned population favors magic. When the winged Alexa falls in love with the horned Marko, the two become a target for the warring factions. With their newborn baby in tow, the couple try to avoid the horrors of war and other lurking monstrosities. At its heart, *Saga* is an old story, but Brian K. Vaughan's narrative is highly engaging, and Piles Staples' art similarly captivating. Better still, they put their own spin on the time-worn tale by populating the story with an assortment of characters that range from the bizarre to the beautiful to the horrific. A masterpiece we're making.



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## NINTH CIRCLE

BOOKS

BLOOD SPATTER:  
A GUIDE TO CINEMATIC ZOMBIE VIOLENCE,  
GORE AND SPECIAL EFFECTSCraig W. Chenery  
Self-published

At this juncture in the zombie zeitgeist, everyone has decided whether they're in or out. If the automotons of festering flesh haven't wormed their way into your heart in an era when lost-dragons can be seen on prime-time TV, they likely never will. But if you're newly enamored with the lurching lugs (they call it pus-bag love) and are understandably overwhelmed by the staggering amount of zombie flicks to catch up on, author Craig W. Chenery has penned a stellar reference that's as focused as a headshot.

In fact, the first 200 pages of *Blood Splatter* are going to be almost exclusively of interest to either those not well versed in chamber orna or obsessive who appreciate number-crunching nerdlily. Chenery meticulously rates more than 300 zombie films in strictly technical categories such as Amount of Gore, Gore Quality, Zombie Count and Zombie Body Count, and includes an approximate timeline to highlight effects sequences, as well as regular reliable checkpoints (i.e.,



First Human Death, First Zombie Death). Scattered throughout the entries are awesome behind-the-scenes photos and storyboards from productions both big (*Army of Darkness*, *Land of the Dead*) and small (*28 Weeks*, *Bloodspatter*), though the impact of the radicles is significantly diminished by the black and white presentation of the self-published book (not to mention numerous editorial oversights), undeniably due to budgetary constraints.

However, the main reason that *Blood Splatter* should interest even veteran deadhead dehdots is the 35 Q&A-style interviews with key players from some of the most beloved zombie fare ever made. Directors Andrew Currie (*28 Days*) and Lloyd Kaufman (*Poultrygeist*), screenwriter John Russo (*Night of the Living Dead*), actor Boyd Kestel (*Poultrygeist*, *Day of the Dead*), and special effects makeup artists Tony Gardner (*Michael Jackson's*

Thriller, *Zombieland*), Greg Mottola (TV's *The Walking Dead*), Tom Savini (*Queen of the Dead*), Toby Segal (*The Crows* remake) and Cliff Wallace (*28 Days Later*) are just a few members of the brainiac trust that Chenery thoughtfully engages to give up the goods on their respective projects and help trace our collective fascination with the stiff-legged set.

While the backing of a publisher surely would've smoothed *Blood Splatter's* rough edges, any zombie fan will find worth in Chenery's assiduous research. Just as long as you don't mind a little dirt with your undead.

TREVOR TURNER

## SILENT HILL: THE TERROR ENGINE

Bernard Perron  
Digital Culture Books

Video games have hollowed out a unique niche in contemporary society. Unlike the one-sided interactions we experience while watching a movie or reading a book, games are much more immersive and can affect a multitude of senses simultaneously.

In the decades since Pong, the medium has branched out to meet nearly every taste and interest known to man. From car racing to military campaigns, riding uniforms to battling dark forces in Middle Earth, there's something for everyone. And for those who lean toward the world of survival horror, there's nothing creepier or more nightmare-inducing than the *Silent Hill* series.

It was only a matter of time before somebody decided to write a book about its cultural influence. And the man for the job turned out to be Bernard Perron, professor of cinema at the Université de Montréal. Having already penned a book about the 1997 puzzle-adventure game *Riven*, Perron set his sights on *Silent Hill*, which he refers to as "the perfect game of a perfect game."

In *The Terror Engine*, he meticulously examines the advent of the survival horror subgenre and just how *Silent Hill* fits into it, comparing and contrasting it with other games, such as the Resident Evil series, as well as popular genre movies, including *Alien*. But the real meat of the book is Perron's exploration of just how

effective *Silent Hill* is at impacting players on both emotional and psychological levels. He does this by not only delving into its eerie soundscape, horrific artwork and terrifying storyline but also by investigating the behind-the-scenes work done by the series' development team (such as how they created the signature fog that permeates the game). A stalker for detail, Perron also investigates just how the simple framing of a scene can set a particular mood and how the background ephemera, from a tattooed movie poster to a misspelled road sign, is an homage from developers to a genre that they so obviously love.

Though written as an academic text, *The Terror Engine* is still an interesting read for fans who might want a little help seeing through the fog of their favorite survival horror series to its lasting influence and value.

ANDREW LEE

THE BEAST OF BOGGY CREEK:  
THE TRUE STORY OF THE FOULKE MONSTERLyle Blackburn  
Anomalist Books

With so many cryptozoology books, television shows and websites devoted to uncovering the truth behind Bigfoot, it's hard to believe that we are only now getting the full lowdown on that legendary cryptid from Foule,



Arkansas — more popularly known as the Boggy Creek area. But Lyle Blackburn knows that the story of the Foule Monster is better than just what could be lurking in the darkness of the forest, and his debut book *The Beast of Boggy Creek: The True Story of the Foule Monster* is a thorough and often fascinating look at Foule itself and the central role that the legend has taken in local history.

Blackburn, perhaps better known as the frontman of Ghoultown and Rue Morgue's own Monster Biome columnist, takes readers night to the heart of the tiny rustic town — poring over local press clippings at the Monster Mart, before heading off to the film set of Charles B. Pierce's '70s classic *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, and then landing in the trenches looking for answers behind a monstrously large unidentified skeleton. Mixing a generous smattering of eyewitness anecdotes with official police and news reports,



**The Feast of Goggy Creek:**  
A sketch by Dave Brezinski

Blackburn weaves his own kind of fantastic story that manages to capture the fun of reading a Time-Life unexplained mystery book under the covers with a flashlight, only with an appropriately adult approach. Touching on local personalities, the area's eerie landscape and the effects of the cryptid craze of the '70s, this is surely the definitive account of the coqueluch's southern-fried cousin and his stomping grounds.



Less vital is Blackburn's own consideration of whether any truth lies behind the mythology—while his personal appraisal of several stories is interesting, it probably won't help readers decide whether the Fouke Monster is a real-life terror or just a carefully perpetrated rural legend. And, as Blackburn himself states earlier on in the book, it doesn't really matter—Bigfoot's pop culture popularity has had an incredible effect on the small Arkansas town. From the gun-toting tourists, persistent television crews, souvenirs and even novelty songs about the area, it's obvious that Fouke will forever live in the shadow of its most infamous resident, and Blackburn's book is a heartfelt appreciation of this cryptozoological history.

PAUL CORIOPE

## EAT YOUR HEART OUT

Duane Ingram  
Brazzaville

In her attempt to take a fresh bite out of the seemingly un-killable zombie subgenre, author Duane Ingram shuffles across territory so familiar that the footprints are still fresh, but with surprising results.

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## THE GRIM READER

FILM VIOLENCE  
HISTORY, IDEOLOGY, QUEST

Jim Kennelrick  
Willow



**SHORT CUTS**

Horror fans get a five-page chapter in this 148-page book, but they're also evoked and analyzed throughout this intelligent, concise and well-supported overview of the meaning of violence in the movies. The approach is scholarly, but the text is clear and highly readable. Recommended for those who like to think deeply about the onscreen violence they ingest.

DEAN DONAHUE



**PRAY TO STAY DEAD**

Megan James Cole  
Port to Dead

It's 1974, the Cold War is raging—and suddenly there are zombies. The survivor takes later events and overlaps in *Pray to Stay Dead* as various stock characters struggle to stay alive. The zombies ultimately take a back seat to the over-the-top (and

slightly unrealistic) human events. But, so far as post-apocalypse stories go, you could do a lot worse.

MICHAEL BOARDMAN



**THE DROWNING GIRL**

Kierlan A. Kierlan  
Rog Trade

Narrator Linda "Imp" Morgan Phelps is a paranoid schizophrenic perceiving a ghost story while contending with her family's history of madness. Could she actually be haunted by her main character's ghost/altercations? Phelps' girlfriend

doesn't stick around to find out, but readers will, as Kierlan masterfully weaves various voices and conflicting stories into this character-driven tale about confused obsession, folklore and the supernatural.

JAMES H. MOHAN

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THE DEVIL'S CINEMA EXPLORES  
HOW A SEEMINGLY AVERAGE  
GENRE FAN WENT FROM INDIE  
FILMMAKER TO SAVAGE KILLER

# DIARY OF A MADMAN

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

**T**YPICALLY, WHEN THE MEDIA TOWNS A CONNECTION BETWEEN HORROR MOVIES AND some terrible crime, the link is tangential at best, exploited to play into existing societal fears and sell more newspapers. But not as in the case of Mark Twichell, an Edmonton, Alberta, genre fan and independent filmmaker who turned the plot of his last short film, *House of Cards*, into a real-life murder-by-numbers that saw him step into the shoes of his main character, and even keep a diary about becoming a serial killer. Not surprisingly, the strange case inspired a book, *The Devil's Cinema* (out now from MacMillan and Stewart).

"I wanted to explore the psychology behind Mark Twichell's actions," says author Steve Lilabuen. "How could he transform from being a young father and filmmaker into a wannabe serial killer, see things overnight, by accident? His wife and closest friends had no warning. This idea that fantasy could somehow merge with reality in a case of such bizarre and unique extremes really fascinated and bothered me."

On the surface, Twichell was your average fella: his favorite season was fall/winter, and the shelves in his house were filled with the same genre movies and books that haunt our own dreams.

Most people that [horror] cops come into contact with are repeat offenders, gangled figures or those in high-risk lifestyles: not guys who watch *Doctor Who* or attend sci-fi conventions," notes Lilabuen. "While the crime was heavily influenced and connected to pop culture, police struggled for a little understanding what it meant for their serial killer suspect to be inspired by *Twister*, casting *Star Wars* and dressing up as *Barbie* from *Transformers*."

To uncover the story of Twichell, Lilabuen extensively mined court records and testimony, as well as online posts, videos and photographs, which he used to form the backbone of his book. He fleshed out his findings with years' worth of interviews with the detectives on the case and even the killer himself. Eventually, he exchanged more than 350 pages of correspondence with Twichell, as well as phone calls.

And, of course, there is Twichell's diary, titled "S.K. Confessions," which is frequently excerpted in *The Devil's Cinema*.

"The diary is fascinating since it reveals how fantasy and reality had become entirely blurred within Twichell's mind," says Lilabuen. "It's unknown how much of the first-person narrator's voice is Twichell's

voice and how much is that of the ruthless serial killer he was seeking to emulate. I guess it reads a bit like the moral American Psycho: that way, there's no element of performance here, a reality behind that performance, and an ambiguity on where the line should be drawn that separates everything — if there even is a line."



But it still brought the author no closer to discovering Twichell's tipping point. If he hadn't become obsessed with fictional serial killer Dexter Morgan, would he still have acted out his violent fantasies? The police think so, as does Lilabuen, who sees *Star-*

lin as having had a focusing effect on dark elements that already lurked in Twichell's personality — and in his creative work.

For instance, the short (which was shot but never completed) that his crime ensueled saw a would-be killer lure an unbalanced man into a secluded building where he tortured him for his social network and email passwords, then graphically stabbed him to death before luring his friends and family to believe he was still alive via online messages. In real life, Twichell chose to prey on single men, as there was less likelihood of a spouse/friend noticing them missing. The first victim he lured to the garage — the same one he shot his horror short in — escaped, but he succeeded in his second attempt and murdered 38-year-old Johnny Brian Alinger. That victim's body was later found in one of the city's sewers. The mask Twichell wore while committing the crime is pictured above with Detective Mark Anstey.

"His horror script is frightening and has several big twists that I think would have worked really well with fans of such time. My actual hands-on filmmaking efforts, however, were pretty amateur," points out the author. "His ambition outstripped his filmmaking abilities."

So how exactly did Edmonton's horror contingent feel about having the spotlight shone upon them in such a negative fashion?

"The city's horror fans and filmmakers were certainly worried about what kind of backlash they would face," Lilabuen explains. "Some began disputing if Mark Twichell could even be called a filmmaker, because he was independent and not a member of any professional associations. A false rumor was published that he had received arts grants for his films, which terrified other local filmmakers into thinking the government would cut off funding to horror-themed projects in response to his slaying. The public, however, was more restrained in seeking out blame. But that didn't stop those in the horror and arts communities from thinking they would be forever tarnished from having the same interests as Twichell, or having come across him in the same circles of friends over the years."

Devin, an Ashbee's Furniture Outlet employee, ekes out a miserable existence. Her failings include trouble paying bills, a dead-end job, a senseless relationship with her live-in girlfriend, and her inability to say the other "L" word—love. When zombies overrun her small town of Nowhere, Ohio, however, Devin must woman up. Teaming with Naomi Ramirez, star of the *Along Came B* movie franchise, she fights her way across town to find her lady love.

The slacktastic setting is recognizable from movies such as *Shaun of the Dead* and *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, replete with a lazy protagonist enduring retail hell, a probability-appealing co-worker and a too-serious manager. Fringed with stumbling-and-then-running flesh-eaters, the author mines popular zombie story elements left, right and centre. But, much like the book's tangit heroine, Ingram finds her own plucky persistence and heroics up, keenly satirizing action fare along the way. It is hard not to laugh when a Nick Fury look-alike named Deus Ex Machina offers, "Come with me if you don't want to get dead."

Ingram also deserves a gold star for twinking the zombie subgenre and reusubjecting what could have been just another calaver on the table. In an astounding twist, a zombie munches on the heroine's foot early on. Now, is Devin turning undead, or merely unable to connect emotionally? The narrative uncertainty helps deliver some genuine surprises. The don't-get-bit-or-you'll-become-one-of-them template is gone, substituted by slowly building hysteria and dead, dead, meanwhile, lives up to her cinematic character, furnishing the bloodletting and shoot-'em-up action that propels the plot. Devin's masochistic fantasy seemingly made flesh, she wields weaponry and sexual tension, relishing up the duo's every exchange.

This is a clever character study updated with recognizable horror tropes, in which the heroine confronts not merely zombies but herself, resulting in a tightly paced, humorous tale about the perils of being emotionally repressed and menaced by the undead.

JAMES K. MORAN

## THE RETURN MAN

V.M. Zito  
Orbit Books

Just when you think you can't possibly read one more zombie book, V.M. Zito comes along with his debut novel *The Return Man*, which could make lovers of the dead out of many horror fans, not just diehard followers of the rotter subgenre. Zito sets his post-apocalyptic tale in an America that has been ravaged by a virulent disease, and instead of following the usual literary tactics that zombie fiction tends to fall back on, he presents an action-packed, plot-driven taut ride that is frightening and savage, and aims to go beyond genre convention.

In the near future, a massive viral outbreak produces barely living, flesh-hungry infected. Protagonist Henry Marco carves out a living in this new world order as a sort of hit man, who is hired by families to track down their zombie-ified loved ones and put them out of their misery. Zito's America is divided between the Evacuated States that are crawling with the rotund walkers, and the Safe States, which are overpopulated and short on resources. But just when you think that things are settling into convenience, the author introduces a political plot that sends Henry on a mission to California (where the outbreak started) with Chinese assassin and double-agent Khong Iku to track down a possible vaccine for the disease.

Zito offers up a gore-heavy page-turner that feels positively cinematic, not unlike Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* or even Stephen King's *The Graveling*, with a kind of neo-western feel. While *The Return Man* may not be a total game-changer—nor is it aiming to be high lit, either—it's an entertaining read whether or not you happen to be a stamper-filler. Well, it could just turn you

JESSA SOBOLSKY

## LIBRARY IS DAMNED

FAREWELL... AND THANK YOU

I suck at goodbyes. Especially when I'm forced to say them years too soon. This time they're for Michael Lucas Gelski, who lost his battle with cancer on Monday, April 30, at age 37. On that day, the world was robbed of an immensely talented and caring horror author.

This isn't the first goodbye I've written in this column, but it is the hardest. Michael was more than just someone whose work I'd admired; he was also a colleague and a friend. I first met him (and his amazing wife Michelle) at a horror convention around the time that his 2008 novel *As Far As Hell Would Have It* was released. As he told the gorgeous limited-edition hardcover across the table to me, he explained that the book was about love, addiction and combat. He had me at combat. They're not typically used to explore relationships.

Turns out, that book was a perfect introduction to Michael's growing career, one filled with emotionally potent, poignant horror stories wrapped in horror narratives that proved startlingly creative even while mixing in some sci-fi and pulp (see *AWW108* for more on his 2011 novella *Blood For His and Blood*).

I later interviewed Michael for *The Magazine*, and then was given the opportunity to publish him via my own small press, when he submitted a novella called *7 Boxes to Burning Ellipses*. I read it in one sitting and found it intelligent, philosophically perplexing and gruesome, but above all, Michael's story about a man driven to cut brains by the voice of a higher power in his head, which may or may not be real, was challenging. (It went on to be a finalist in the Lung Fiction category at this year's Bram Stoker Awards.)

I found out about Michael's cancer while we were working on the book, and I was shocked. Here he was going through treatment for one of the scariest illnesses out there—and had been for some time—yet still exuberant and every deadline he had. Maybe that's why I always believed that someone he'd be beat it, because his fight, his determination, his positive attitude about everything (even when complaining about medical procedures) made it seem impossible that he wouldn't. But as the universe likes to remind us, we don't make those decisions. Fate does.

Even as I mourn Michael's passing—and try to come to terms with the fact that we'll never celebrate another good review together, do another book, or even just gab about horror over dinner—I worry that his work will fade into obscurity, especially since so much of it resides in the domain of the small press. His death is absolutely heartbreaking, but that would make it doubly so.

I may not know how to say goodbye, but I won't ever forget. Thank you, Michael, for the memories—and the scary stories.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



Michael Lucas Gelski (second from right) is spotted by myself and authors Wendee Ochoa and Mike Stouthard at Allen-Con 3.



# THE FRIGHT GALLERY

EDITED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: GARBAGE PAIL KIDS MAKE A COMEBACK



**W**HEN ULTIMATE GROSS-OUT WEATHERMAN RANK CATTLE DECAPITATION was sending ideas for how to promote his new album, *Apocalypse of Inhumanity* (out now on MCA), Black, the band members thought being immortalized as Garbage Pail Kids would be right up their desecrated back alley.

Literally, the San Diego band's music touches upon the mistreatment of animals, and imagines putting humans through sensory horror: mental, physical, and slaughter. Visually, the band isn't afraid to be offensive or shock. The gag refers either. The cover art for the 2004 album *Apocalypse*, which depicts a cow excreting human remains, is enough to make Ted Nugent as a vegan. It seemed like Cattle Decapitation and the notorious gore-bon sticker trading cards were a match made in Hell, and who better to make the morbid match-up a reality than arguably the greatest and best known artist in the past, the legendary Tom Bank?

"The artwork is not really any more violent than some of my other stuff I've done for the Garbage Pail Kids or MAD magazine," says the artist of the custom art, which features GPK-style caricatures of band members Travis Fryer ("Travis Fryer"), Josh Elmore ("Josh El Gore"), Dave McGraw ("Dave McNew") and Derek Engstrom ("Derek Funeral"). "The Cattle boys didn't suggest anything gruesome, it came from me. I just tried to follow the music."

Born in Germany, Bank has worked with Topps as the collectible Garbage Pail Kids card space cartoonists Art Spiegelman and Mark Newgard created the series in the mid-'80s. His talent for rendering bad taste and combining it with absurd humor has led to a long-term collaboration with MAD and has earned him a lot of a reputation among his peers. When artists would decline an assignment they deemed too horrific, Bank had no problem picking up the slack.



"I got a reputation for doing this kind of bloody guts-and-eyes-on-the-wall stuff, really macabre and shocking stuff," he confesses. "So I doctored it up, and I don't mind."

Bank has conceptualized and printed hundreds of GPK cards using a combination of acrylics, water colors and ink—whatever he can find—to birth his gory creations, including a few noted personal favorites such as Billy Liar, Jack Splat and Jay Decay. During the height of the card's popularity, the GPKs (the name a riff on the Cabbage Patch Kids dolls that were immensely popular at the time) found their way onto the playground before many schools moved to ban them. (By 1987, the trading cards had even appeared in an exploitation live-action movie, though the movie effort is probably best left in the dump.) But, as Bank reminds us, there's no such thing as bad publicity.

"The controversy was the best thing that could have happened to us," he affirms. "The more the grown-ups objected the cards, the more they were loved by the kids. The kids collected them from their own adults now and are turning their kids onto them."

With online rumors reporting that former Disney mogul Michael Eisner's The Walt Disney Company is planning a new movie based on the cards, the GPKs were poised to possibly make a dirty return. Bank, who reveals that he has completed eleven fresh sketches for a new, "more classic," hand-printed series of GPK cards, says there's no deep secret to the lasting appeal of the famous lowbrow goods.

"It's always popular to make cute things ugly and gross, and take them apart and throw them around," he offers. "And secondly, they are very well painted. I may humbly add."

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EVER MADE  
(THIS MONTH)**



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Film Director's Each  
Year Get A Classic  
Story By Edgar Allan  
Poe In This New  
Anthology Film

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The Woods...  
Kids Get Dead**

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# THE GORE MET

**MENII: A SICK AND TWISTED RADICE SALAD**



**I**talian cult film legend Giovanni Lombardo Radice is likely the only actor in cinematic history who can claim to be in two films in which women get their breasts graphically skewered. Now's that for obscure honor credit?

As John Moghna, he appeared in Umberto Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* (1981) playing a murderous drug dealer forced to watch vengeful natives hang Zora Novare by her breasts. More recently, he appeared as Mr. Roop in Guillermo Cristophari's *House of Flesh Mannequins* (2008), but just re-released on DVD as a doting but sinister father with a mechanical leg and a fondness for cigarettes and liquor (Granted, he's not exactly in the film's best pseudo-small clip, featuring a woman getting her breasts agonizingly drilled through sideways, but his close enough).

An Italian/Newman co-production, the movie is sometimes overly ambitious and challenging. A prominently displayed poster for Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) reveals the principal inspiration for Cristophari's script, which also borrows



from one of which is occupied by Sarah (Irish A-listing) and her father (Radice). When he's not taking photos or shooting video, Sebastian stores disconcertingly at Sarah through her window. She gently weeds her way into Sebastian's home and asks to see his work. Instead (in the spirit of *Peeping Tom*), he shows her footage

him jerking off to a graphic self film and Cora-Lun is arrested. Sarah reveals her dark desire to Sebastian and makes love to him while an explicit film plays in the background. Their relationship disintegrates in "Epilogue."

Despite a secondary role, Radice is the main attraction, dispensing advice and some of the pseudo-intellectual bubble of the homoerotic riffs of television (which regularly bogs down the plot) before coming on to Sarah's boyfriend, Tamey (Jared Benji). Arca's skilled delivery of his English dialogue actually enhances the awkwardness of his character, and Hoffman is simply scribbling.

The extras on the Elite Entertainment DVD include the typical making-of supplements, and a less typical sixteen-minute companion called *Scarf Films* entitled to "Vice Hansel's Amnesia," comprised of the full sequence of the five craft bits used in the film. There's a man who has his seedies stuck in and through his penis, which looks distressingly real, a parody that doesn't, a third guy tormented with a near blade, a head woman who is unconcerningly beaten and stabbed, and finally the utterly disturbing pilot de debilitance — a bit from a little short in which a woman suspended in the air by hooks through the flesh of her back is lowered to the ground so a film metal rod can be hammered through her breasts before being attached to an electric dial.

Now, where's the bleach? I need a bath...



traumatized scenarios of naked men and women — some of whom are disgorged — before entering a room in which a man stomps broken glass like grapes in a barrel, his blood trickling out a spout in the bottom.

Sebastian finally loses his precious grasp on sanity in "Act III — Sarah" after Sarah's father catches

This segue into "Act I — Sebastian," which introduces a troubled inventor (Dominic Arca) who takes photographs of fetal accidents and the organized sexual abuse of children for Cora-Lun (Randa Madani), a flamboyant smut peddler who deals fish from a street-side newsstand. Sebastian has divided his family home into rental apart-



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## THE RAVEN/ AN EVENING WITH EDGAR ALLAN POE

Les Barber

REMASTERED

Soundtrack fans, there are few better ways to get your Poe on than with this limited mono CD, which features two very distinct horror scores by Les Barber, America International's in-house composer. With *The Raven* (1963), he decided to draw from his existing Poe scores and basically howl low, writing self-referential, self-effacing music that mirrored Roger Corman's own cheeky sense of humor. The swirling neo-classic spooky stage and pinwheel electronics ("Main Title"), drunken xylophone and loopy woodwinds, and a rumbunctious orchestral gallop ("Wild Ride to the Castle") evocative of the team-in-a-haunted-house comedies taped upon him by the studio. In 1970, however, Barber must have relished a chance to attack gothic horror with more complex ideas, and he zealously explored the four tales in the anthology *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe* using a slim chamber orchestra and veritable amounts of electronics. The end result is arguably his most mature work, ripe with the modernism he should've exploited in his career much more often. **MB B.B.B.B.**



## THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

David Lee

REMASTERED

The masque of the Red Death ought to have established British composer David Lee as a true voice in horror, but

the former jazzman slipped back to TV work and never scored another feature film. Written with stellar professionalism for the genre, and evoking some gothic sounds of the medieval period, Lee's score is a multi-thematic offering that covers all of the striking dramatic moments in Poe's tale, with robust orchestral sounds matching the film's seductively colorful scene. Spain's Quater Records reissued the score using the surviving acetate music stems from what's called a DME (diagrammatic effects) track and it's a bang-up job, with balanced audio levels and clean transitions between scenes. Lee's elegant writing offers mystery, humor, melodrama, militaristic tension and a lush romantic theme in one tight package. This is some of the first writing with AIP's cherished Poe series. **MRH B.B.B.B.**



## LODS OF THE HIGHWAY

Death Before 2nd Place

Robert Scott

Psychobilly is a genre at its rebellion and breaking chords, which has ironically caused it to share several of its own. Yet there's something to be said for staying true to form, and Cleveland, Ohio's Lords of the Highway stick to it like penicillin to penpals. *Death Before 2nd Place* is an all-inclusive package of everything psych, with plenty of doghouse slapping and guitar howling. Sole founding member Dennis A Bell does his best Reverend Horton Heat impression on vocals, just to keep everything within the realm of the familiar, and the band's collective love of hot rods and monster movies is blatant on songs such as "Bad Rod" and "Run from the Graveyard." Basically, if you've heard any other "billy album from the past 30 years, then you've heard this one too, although if you're the mood from some good 'ol flash-wood psycho 'n' roll, then it'd be **MB B.B.**



## THE DECOMPOSED

Dennis the Dead

Corn & Blood Records

Tulsa, Oklahoma, punk rockets The Decomposed have had a long and troubled history. Formed in 2003, the quartet weathered bad management and several lineup changes before finally releasing this follow-up to its original six-song EP. Right from the outset, the influences of Motley and Social Distortion are obvious, as the songs form an eclectic mix of punk anthems and '50s doo-wop ballads. The boys don't stray too far from the established horror punk norms of fast guitar chords and B-movie-inspired lyrics, but the splashes of metal and thrash on songs such as "Red Night" help keep things from getting too stale. Lead singer Bryan Hellmouth's vocals are more luddite folk than Glenn Danzig, although his style is stiff with a wha-oh. There are some catchy songs and interesting ideas here, but with the genre as overcast as

it is, The Decomposed are about as fresh as the name implies. **MB B.B.**



## MARILYN MANSON

Born Villain

Dark Horse Records

After it's been touted in the press as a conceptualism, Marilyn Manson's eighth studio effort is really more of a meditation on the nature of Willy Wonka—albeit with, as you might expect, multiple nods to self-loathing, destruction and violence. Born Villain references willing in literary texts such as *Woe to the Overman* (the Path of Misery) and *Madeline's Les Fleurs du Mal* ("The Flowers of Evil"), as Manson takes on the roles of murderer, abuser and punish through his lyrics, but he also considers the media's part in glamorizing real-life horror ("Ste-Motion"). The sound is more stripped down than it was on his last collaboration, *The Night End of Love*, but its combination of heavy, doom-laden romanticism

## HYMNS FOR THE HOUSE OF HORROR III

### WINDHARD

5/11

Forensic Records

The ominous strains of a thunderstorm that open "Black Chamber" won't be the only feature of Windhard's debut to stir shivers in Black Sabbath fans. Even the cover art and logo hint we need to the Gate Naps, there's nothing chancier about the major pledge this five-piece from Richmond, Virginia, has made to revisit the occult-themed ramble of Birmingham's legendary Madchester. Darin Goff's solo-drenched voice does as high as Ozzy Osbourne's wily howl and the deft guitar plod of Garret Morris and Archibald Bogden sounds like Toy Town playing low monster riffs at half-speed while awareness by a case of the worms and fasses. But if Windhard lack invention, they balance the scales with expertly wussy control, and the five songs here, which toll for over 43 minutes, make for an intoxicating set of sweet left-eyed doses. Why bother covering your tracks when you can prove the odds left a few hits behind? Once the smoke clears, make sure to download "Amaranth," a brand-new dual Windhard recorded exclusively for *Hymns for the House of Horror III*. **AT B.B.B.B.**

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# the DEVIL'S PLAYLIST

**W**hile much has been made of 3-D's potential to put asses back in movie theater seats, the sound of the multiplex has mostly remained the same over the past twenty years. Whether the line you've pecked yourself off the couch to see is being shown in Dolby Digital, DTS or Sony's SDDS, each of the three formats currently used in theaters can only handle up to eight channels of distinct digital sound.

Could the lack of any significant upgrade in what the multiplexes offer audio-wise be a factor in the growing number of folks staying away from cinemas? I think so, especially when even a \$300 surround sound system and a Blu-ray player can easily immerse you deeper into the movie magic within the comfort of your own home. Personally, I don't want to just see added dimensions at the movies, I want to *hear* them too. And apparently I'm not alone.

Dolby Laboratories recently announced its "most significant innovation in years," a new system that will break from the traditional left-right format of theatrical sound. Dolby Atmos (not the clearest of names, guys) will



incorporate 64 speaker feeds and 128 simultaneous audio inputs that can swirl sound in any direction, promising audiences a more natural, sensory experience due to the precision with which sound designers will be able to place noises and the seemingly infinite number of locations they can place them.

"You can imagine watching a scary movie, and it's a scene [where] someone is hiding in a basement and there are footsteps on the floorboards above," says Dolby's Stuart Bowling during a demonstration at the company's San Francisco headquarters. "The Atmos system will actually play that audio from above people in the theater."

I love that Dolby's ad went straight to the example of a genre film to best illustrate the value of the new system's capabilities. Try to wring your brain around the added right factor of hearing the loathly little vermin in *Platoon* 300 coming from 64 spots in the audio spectrum. Or the extra deadness of watching a movie such as *Se7en* and feeling like you too are being pelted by the non-stop rain overhead. Can you even fathom watching a chase scene in a slasher film and hearing the killer desperately swiping at your back with his blade as if you were the one he wasn't going to let get away?

According to a press release, Atmos will debut in select theaters this year with screenings of Disney/Pixar's animated fantasy *Brave*, with a larger rollout set for 2013. It's a welcome announcement, as lately I've found going to the movies has become more of an aural assault than an experience. It's as if, in a war attempt to match the mind-blowing visuals, theater managers have taken Samuel Beckett's advice and simply turned the volume up to eleven. Hopefully, with such a powerful new tool at their disposal, there will be less cheap jump-scares and more genuinely aural and immersive sound designs to make our blood run cold.

Dolby eventually plans to adapt Atmos for home theaters too, but I suspect it'll be a while before we're ducking for cover in our living rooms while watching *The Birds*. For now, the idea of horror movies in the theater is sounding better all the time.

So make it be

TRISTAN THOMPSON

and ironic lyrical fantasy remains unrepentable, Korn Wilson probably won't make any new concert, but it's a thoughtful and ultimately satisfying album from a performer who continues to develop and evolve philosophically. **GH 3.5/5**



## SIX FEET UNDER

Undead  
MUSIC BLAZE

Six Feet Under's legacy is a series of perfectly senseless, if not spectacular, bludgeoning old-school death metal albums, but there are still many who dismiss the Florida quartet for its overly slow, simplistic approach. To be fair, SFU has never truly progressed beyond its first two releases, 1995's *Murdered* and 1997's *Wretched*, and when the group does devote — this death 'n' roll of the three *Garageband* Censoria albums, for instance — the result is usually a flat North studio album divided in the first in a long while to feature significant lineup changes, namely the addition of guitarist Rob Arnold (ex-Chimera) and drummer Kevin Toal (ex-Dying Fetus) and the loss of bassist Terry Butler to Deafness. The result is a renewed sense of urgency, even if the band adheres to its aural formula of tortoise-paced riffs and Chris Barnes' anarchy growl ("Moleat Dead" and "Near Death Experience"). But there's a slightly more technical and speedy edge to some songs, especially "Penance at the Moment of Death" and "Delayed Combustion Device," which makes SFU sound reinvigorated. Essentially, fans will find *Undead* well worth excavating. **Holers for locking digma. AVL 3.5/5**



## MACABRE

Blood Murders  
MUSIC BLAZE

Retra death metal bands are a dime a dozen these days, but Macabre — a collaboration between famed illustra-

tor Mark Reddick (whose work graces much for bands including Grave and the Black Dahlia Murder) and Belgian vocalist Adrien "Ugarte" Weber — takes the concept one step further and attempts to recreate the sound of an actual demo. The results are less than inspiring. To capture up that morbid, early '90s sound, the duo recorded in a basement, using bare-bones production values and very modest instrumentation. But instead of sounding like some cool throwback to the days of early Autopsy and Asphyx, Macabre comes off as a weak and fairly boring imitation. The recording is water-thin, the vocals monotonous and the songwriting extremely one-dimensional, rarely deviating from its mid-tempo plodding. The lack of originality and sound quality may have been purposeful, but a band barely going through the motions doesn't leave much for the listener. **AVL 3**



## MONARCH

Omega  
AT A LOSS

Since forming in France in 2002, Monarch (and alternatively Monarch) or The Monarchy has garnered quite a bit of interest from the metal world with its unique, conceptual blend an traditional doom 'n' draw aesthetics. Despite having traditionally released double-disc ensembles, the band's sixth full-length consists of only three organ-grinding tracks. Composed in the same manner as the yawning black abysses of Sunn O))), Monarch, Omega nevertheless features Monarch's fastest and most memorable work. Kary's aorta is exposed between the bookending sprawl of the fifteen-minute "Blood Scurves" and nearly twenty-minute "Black Becomes the Sun," her the grim and majestic consecutive issue of "Transylvanian Incantations," which seems like a nod to Mercy's Darkthrone. Black metal and horrorcore alike will find Omega's bleak soundscapes akin to the score for David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. Both are creepy, unsettling journeys into the outermost recesses of visceral fear and overwhelming dread. Consider this essential for those eager to explore each depth to their utmost creative and **GP 3.5/5**

MARDUK GUICARISC MORGAN HÅKANSSON REFLECTIVELY  
RE-TURNS TO CIVILIZATION TO REFLECT UPON 22 YEARS OF  
MARCHING THE LONG HARD ROAD INTO HELL

# DARK ENDLESS

—BY JAY H. MACARTHUR

WHEN I FIRST ATTEMPTED TO REACH MORGAN HÅKANSSON, MARDUK'S FOUNDING GUITARIST, HE WAS REPORTEDLY OFF THE GRID, SOMEWHERE in the Scandinavian wilderness hunting elk and wild boar—presumably with a rifle or bow, though considering the principal sins: punishment. His band has consistently melted out since the landmark 1991 *Fuck Me Jesus Christ*, a double-headed axe could not be altogether ruled out.

Later, safely re-enscained in his tranquil woods in Norrköping, Sweden, Håkansson is reluctant to enter a straight line between his first trials and the most recent epic black metal Marduk masterpiece, *Serpent Sermon* (out June 5 from Century Media Records).

"For me, writing extreme music is a 70-lb machine of steel rolling across a battlefield, it's far more inspiring than sitting around looking in a lake and being depressed," he asserts. "I don't get that. I'd rather have a drum that sounds like a machine gun."

Yes, but did the impulses that lured Håkansson out of so-called civilization also inform the "praises of death and gospels of the warm" found on *Serpent Sermon*?

"Being a beast of prey, you look upon things in your own way," Håkansson insists. "Black metal is what Marduk is. We let the energy flow and it takes us where it takes us. This time it just took us to a bit more diabolical place."

A bit more diabolical? Add "maga-level master of understatement" to Håkansson's curriculum after his supinely brutish as the wicked strains of 1990's *Woodsword* are. *Serpent Sermon* takes the party to an entirely new dimension of Hell Tracks such as "Hail Mary (Piss-Soaked Genslerent)," "Satanism's Gold" and "Messiah's Possession" needle malice, and the album's raw-as-punk production perfectly incarnates Marduk's otherworldly brry into Håkansson's female machine.

"It is Marduk since 1992," Håkansson declares. "The most important thing to me as an artist is not to break new ground. It is to deliver the message clearly."

And what is that message? "I really shouldn't say the truth—the *Serpent* will speak to everybody in different ways. Hopefully they'll make up thei own minds."

Like many heavy metal guitarists of his generation, Håkansson out his teeth on 1983, Accept and Judas Priest before Iron Maiden set him quivering for heavier, darker music. He bought a guitar from the brother of a school chum and asked

another pal to show him a few chords.

"He said it was impossible [to learn]," Håkansson says with a laugh. "[Bleeding] I don't like nails. Invent chords if you must. But bring your creation to a plateau of invincibility."

This natural aversion to regimentation proved a boon not a flaw when Håkansson formed Marduk in 1990 as a vehicle for the blasphemous cacophony ruling inside his head, choosing the name of a Babylonian god of light "to corrupt it, to show that everything is being corrupted in the end."

A trio of underground classics ensued: *Dark Endless* (1992), *Thorn of the Devil* (1993) and *Opus Nocturne* (1994). By the time Marduk released *Heaven Shall Burn: When We Are Delivered* in 1998, Norwegian church burnings and the murder of Mayhem founder Euronymous at the hands of Burzum's Count Grasmork had placed an international spotlight on black metal. As *Finest of Devils* was slated in the documentary *Until the Light Takes Us* (RMSB), "the sale of black lipstick went through the roof." The audience for Marduk's dark arts similarly burgeoned.

"Black metal and everything that came with it was too interesting for the press to ignore," Håkansson says. "When

you do something extraordinary, it expands rapidly. But growing is not only good. You get a lot of crap, too."

Despite the sidebar sensationalism, Marduk never surrendered integrity or fidelity to head-hoppers (for example, says Håkansson, "People ask why we still wear corpse paint. It represents the spiritual side of the band. Why should we quit because others tried to rule it?") or ecstasies.

"We sometimes meet fans on tour who weren't even born when we did our first demo tape," Håkansson says. "It's like, 'Oh shit. Time is flying.' But I'm proud to be in a band that still plays songs we wrote in 1991. All our albums are the pillars upon which we stand. It is our 22nd year, but we are stronger than ever in both body and mind. I feel as if we will still be going to march for a long time."



# PLAY DEAD

**NOW PLAYING > HOUSE OF THE DEAD 4, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO**

4/5/10



## HOUSE OF THE DEAD 4

PlayStation Network  
Shogo

Sometimes we want a game that immerses us in a world rich with imagination that's anchored by a great narrative and inventive dialogue. Other times, we just want to shoot the hell out of anything and everything stupid enough to wander into our crosshairs—logic and plot be damned—and Shogo got just the scratch for that itch: finger finger finger.

*House of the Dead 4*, the latest downloadable incarnation of the light-gun arcade game first unleashed in 2005, gets the next-gen treatment in a PlayStation Network exclusive. As expected, it benefits from the gloss and sheen of its hi-def upgrade. The graphics are crisp and fluid, and generally it's smooth and makes decent use of the PlayStation Move controller. And, as with the other games in the series, it's the model of simplicity: Alternating between automatic weapons and limited hand grenades, you (and a friend) must escape from an underground complex while blasting away at the hordes of numerous undead and other assorted monsters that get in your way.

Granted, the story is low-grade B-movie fare and the dialogue leaves a lot to be desired. But nobody ever went to the arcade for a gripping narrative, and this console version delivers the positive arcade experience: shoot, reload, move on to the next stage. Even though we've been at it for years, there's nothing more pleasurable than mowing down hordes of zombies, especially with unlimited ammo. The only drawback to all this high-caliber mayhem lies in the controls. Reloading is done by shaking the controller, which can mean the difference between survival or being egregiously immersed in these tight situations. Using your peripherals also gets a little awkward, as it requires pressing the button on the top of the controller. It may not seem that big of a deal, but timing is everything.



Minor control griping aside, *House of the Dead 4* is a ton of fun and reasonably priced, too. As an extra bonus, completing the game unlocks two chapters that were exclusive to only a handful of arcade cabinets around the world. While the entire campaign can be completed in approximately an hour and may seem quaint compared to *Call of Duty* and the *Call of Duty: Zombies* expansions, it holds up well as a nostalgic reminder of long hours spent in a dimly lit arcade, mashing away your fingertips. Better yet, your pockets won't be bogged down by a trackload of quarters.

**RON KOCOTKO**

RECOMMEND: DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO



## DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO

iPhone, iPad, PlayStation  
Gameloft Studios, LLC

Spend any time browsing through the Apple App store and it's obvious: zombies still rule casual smartphones/tablet gaming. You can kill them with commandos, pick them off of rooftops with muscle cars, form your own army of

them, and even guide them through mazes while collecting coins and jewels. Only in such a landscape would vampires feel fresh—even if the game in question is more of a streamlined amalgam of what's come before.

*Dark Legends* casts you as a werewolf that has just woken up from an extra-long slumber with a score to settle—with vampires. And thus begins your mission of vengeance. The game allows a combination of click-through questing (similar to *Castle Age* or *Vampire Wars*) but without requiring multiple clicks to complete one mission) and action-RPG gameplay (as in *Gangster Hunter*) that sees you slicing-and-

dicing zombies, ghosts, ghouls, vampire hunters and other assorted folk. Like the aforementioned point-and-click titles, *Dark Legends* runs on an "energy" system, meaning that once your meter has run out, you can't play again until it recharges.

Surprisingly, this isn't nearly as annoying here as in other games, thanks to an RPG-style dungeon to traverse (which takes three to five minutes to complete) roughly every three missions allows your energy meter to recharge in the background. And if you run out, you can always shop (for clothes or supplies), join a guild or socialize with other players in the Vampire District, where you'll also find parties to PVP (player vs. player) areas that allow you to test your supernatural resolve against your peers.

*Dark Legends* can be frustrating to play on an iPhone, though, as the controls are small and don't work if your thumbs aren't perfectly positioned on the screen, but for a game that was still free as of this writing, that's a tiny quibble. If you're sick of iPhone zombies, spend some time with the largest cat island.

**MARGA S. KUEHLER**

RECOMMEND: DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO, DARK LEGENDS: 3D MMO



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# CLASSIC CUT

## THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS

ROMAN POLANSKI ☠ UK—1967

**A**s the horror-comedy film approaches its conclusion, it shows no sign of choking on its own blood. Hammer attempts at the ratings, such as *The Ghost Breakers* (1914), helped aim the "Old Dark House" pictures that were often based on stage plays, which wheeled out gothic conventions to mere adjuncts to the plotting. The ensuing decades saw the advent of "talkies" and James Whale's strict use of humor before the Universal monsters were reflexively drenched by the likes of Abbott and Costello.

By 1967, the paraversers of the horror-comedy hybrid were well established, allowing a 34-year-old Roman Polanski to embark on his own knowing parody of Hammer films. Drawing specifically on *Dracula* at *Dracula* and *Kiss of the Vampire*, as well as European folklore and silent comedies, Polanski and co-writer Gerard Brach conceived the story of Professor Abraham (Jack MacGowran, in a role written especially for him), a loner Habsburg-nomadic, who wanders into the heart of Transylvania accompanied by his widowed apprentice Alfred (Polanski). Their awkward attempts to vanquish vampires steer them into the icy clutches of Count van Kriepack (Ferdinand Mayrhofer), a courtly bloodsucker who has snatched away the local innkeeper's beautiful flame-haired daughter, Sarah (Sharon Tate).

The \$1.75-million budget (which Polanski's notorious perfectionism eventually bumped to more than \$2 million) meant the movie boasted sumptuous production values and was filmed on location in the Romanian Mountains (although an unexpected fire resulted in the end shooting black-and-white colorless of London's Shepherd's Bush). The decorous interiors of Castle von Kriepack, its dusty rooms and corridors filled with cobwebs, were also constructed there as Polanski was unable to find a suitably gothic-looking castle.

The exaggerated turns by MacGowran and Alla Reis as Shaggy, the lachrymose innkeeper who pursues the unobtainable aristocratic beauty (Tate Lewis), help restrict dialogue to a minimum. This allowed Polanski to use visual humor (Alfred eating the castle walls on Abraham's shoulders only for the Professor to sink into the snow) and sound (Alfred mistaking the singing of the Count's foppish son, Herbert—lan Guerner cosplaying Boris's first overly gay vampire—for that of his icy love) to considerable effect. Both combine wonderfully for the film's most celebrated gag, as an unwitting victim repeats Shaggy's advances with a crackle only for him to carp in a thick Yiddish accent: "Oh, have you got the wrong vampire?"

Polanski may allow such humor to impinge on the fear, but he also creates several richly textured images that linger when fading



soundlessly on a sponging of blood in the bathtub, Alfred and Abraham watching from the castle parapets as the undead emerge from their snow-covered beds below. The fairy-tale castle is further evoked as Abraham, Alfred and Sarah masquerade as vampires at the Midnight Ball, formulating a plan of escape whilst weaving through a multitude of moaning aristocracy. This haunting sequence—obscured with stately choreography by Boris Lankov—has a remarkable payoff (borrowed liberally by 2004's *Van Helsing*) as the three mortals find that they see the lone figures reflected in the bathroom's mirror.

Convinced by its "arty" leanings, producer Martin Ranshoff caused nearly twenty minutes of *The Fearless Vampire Killers* for American distribution, adding an extended title sequence courtesy of cartoonist André Franke, and re-cubbing some of the cast's Eastern European accents (including Polanski's). To compound matters, he insisted on the ludicrous title *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, or *Pardon Me But Your Beth Are in My Neck* (inspired, Polanski discovered this cut, complaining that Ranshoff had transformed his film into a "Transylvanian Beverly Hills Cop").

The film's memorable climax—which sees Abraham, Sarah and Alfred facing Transylvania—contains one final cruel irony (later duplicated in *Count Dracula*, *Interview*) as our armed heroes who are ultimately responsible for spreading the vampire plague across the face of the Earth. This sordid coup de grace is deliciously typical of Polanski's contemplative fatalism.

The influence of the film can most be seen in the vicious vampire comedies that emerged in the ensuing decades, and the tongue-in-cheek gothic fairy tales of Tim Burton. The lithe-haired director's efforts to recreate *The Fearless Vampire Killers'* heightened atmosphere in 1999's *Sticky Hollow* resulted in his insistence that the cast watch Polanski's film before shooting commenced.

The movie also served as inspiration for the successful European stage musical *Three of Wives* (aka *Dance of the Vampires*), which premiered in Vienna, Austria, in October 1997 and continues to be performed all over the world, and has been referenced and sampled in the music of bands such as Bad Brains and Skinny Puppy. Though not as celebrated as the filmmaker's other work of the era—*Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Tenant*—*The Fearless Vampire Killers* nevertheless sunk its fangs deep into the bloodsucker subgenre.

RICHARD DOYLE







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The logo for the game "Lollipop Chainsaw" is displayed. It features a girl with a chainsaw for a head, a rainbow, and the text "LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW" in a stylized font.

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